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ANDERSEN

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OXFORD EDITION

FAIRY TALES

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

REVISED AND IN PART NEWLY TRANSLATED BY

W. A. & J. K. CRAIGIE

WITH FIFTY-SIX ILLUSTRATIONS



HUMPHREY MILFORD

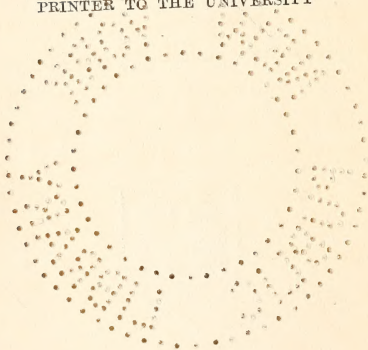
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PREFACE

THIS edition contains a selection from the prose tales written by H. C. Andersen between 1835 and 1872, some of which are here for the first time translated into English. The arrangement follows that of the standard Danish edition, in which the tales are printed for the most part in the order in which they were originally written or published. Those pieces which have not been specially translated for this collection have throughout been carefully collated with the Danish text, with the result that many errors and inaccuracies have been corrected, interpolations excised, and omissions restored. The revision of these tales, and the translation of the remainder, has mainly been carried out by Mrs. Craigie.

W. A. C.

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THE TINDER-BOX

THERE came a soldier marching along the high road—*one, two! one, two!* He had his knapsack on his back and a sabre by his side, for he had been in the wars, and now he wanted to go home. And on the way he met with an



old witch : she was very hideous, and her under lip hung down upon her breast. She said, ' Good evening, soldier. What a fine sword you have, and what a big knapsack ! You're a proper soldier ! Now you shall have as much money as you like to have.'

' I thank you, you old witch ! ' said the soldier.

' Do you see that great tree ? ' quoth the witch ; and she pointed to a tree which stood beside them. ' It's

quite hollow inside. You must climb to the top, and then you'll see a hole, through which you can let yourself down and get deep into the tree. I'll tie a rope round your body, so that I can pull you up again when you call me.'

'What am I to do down in the tree?' asked the soldier.

'Get money,' replied the witch. 'Listen to me. When you come down to the earth under the tree, you will find yourself in a great hall: it is quite light, for many hundred lamps are burning there. Then you will see three doors; these you can open, for the keys are in the locks. If you go into the first chamber, you'll see a great chest in the middle of the floor; on this chest sits a dog, and he's got a pair of eyes as big as two tea-cups. But you need not care for that. I'll give you my blue-checked apron, and you can spread it out upon the floor; then go up quickly and take the dog, and set him on my apron; then open the chest, and take as many farthings as you like. They are of copper: if you prefer silver, you must go into the second chamber. But there sits a dog with a pair of eyes as big as mill-wheels. But do not you care for that. Set him upon my apron, and take some of the money. And if you want gold, you can have that too—in fact, as much as you can carry—if you go into the third chamber. But the dog that sits on the money-chest there has two eyes as big as the round tower of Copenhagen. He is a fierce dog, you may be sure; but you needn't be afraid, for all that. Only set him on my apron, and he won't hurt you; and take out of the chest as much gold as you like.'

'That's not so bad,' said the soldier. 'But what am I to give you, you old witch? for you will not do it for nothing, I fancy.'

'No,' replied the witch, 'not a single farthing will I have. You shall only bring me an old tinder-box which my grandmother forgot when she was down there last.'

'Then tie the rope round my body,' cried the soldier.

'Here it is,' said the witch, 'and here's my blue-checked apron.'

Then the soldier climbed up into the tree, let himself slip down into the hole, and stood, as the witch had said, in the great hall where the many hundred lamps were burning.

Now he opened the first door. Ugh ! there sat the dog with eyes as big as tea-cups, staring at him. 'You're a nice fellow !' exclaimed the soldier ; and he set him on the witch's apron, and took as many copper farthings as his pockets would hold, and then locked the chest, set the dog on it again, and went into the second chamber. Aha ! there sat the dog with eyes as big as mill-wheels.

'You should not stare so hard at me,' said the soldier ; 'you might strain your eyes.' And he set the dog upon the witch's apron. When he saw the silver money in the chest, he threw away all the copper money he had, and filled his pockets and his knapsack with silver only. Then he went into the third chamber. Oh, but that was horrid ! The dog there really had eyes as big as the round tower, and they turned round and round in his head like wheels.

'Good evening !' said the soldier ; and he touched his cap, for he had never seen such a dog as that before. When he had looked at him a little more closely, he thought, 'That will do,' and lifted him down to the floor, and opened the chest. Mercy ! what a quantity of gold was there ! He could buy with it the whole of Copenhagen, and the sugar-pigs of the cake-woman, and all the tin soldiers, whips, and rocking-horses in the whole world. Yes, that was a quantity of money ! Now the soldier threw away all the silver coin with which he had filled his pockets and his knapsack, and took gold instead : yes, all his pockets, his knapsack, his boots, and his cap were filled, so that he could scarcely walk. Now indeed he had plenty of money. He put the dog on the chest, shut the door, and then called up through the tree, 'Now pull me up, you old witch.'

'Have you the tinder-box ?' asked the witch.

'Plague on it !' exclaimed the soldier, 'I had clean forgotten that.' And he went and brought it.

The witch drew him up, and he stood on the high road again, with pockets, boots, knapsack, and cap full of gold.

'What are you going to do with the tinder-box ?' asked the soldier.

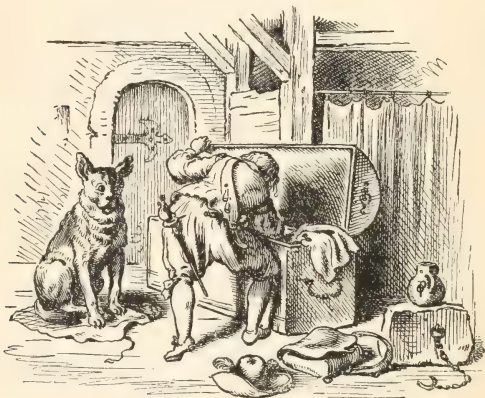
'That's nothing to you,' retorted the witch. 'You've had your money—just give me the tinder-box.'

‘Nonsense!’ said the soldier. ‘Tell me directly what you’re going to do with it, or I’ll draw my sword and cut off your head.’

‘No!’ cried the witch.

So the soldier cut off her head. There she lay! But he tied up all his money in her apron, took it on his back like a bundle, put the tinder-box in his pocket, and went straight off towards the town.

That was a splendid town! He put up at the very



best inn, asked for the finest rooms, and ordered his favourite dishes, for now he was rich, having got so much money. The servant who had to clean his boots certainly thought them a remarkably old pair for such a rich gentleman; but he had not bought any new ones yet. The next day he procured proper boots and handsome clothes. Now our soldier had become a fine gentleman; and the people told him of all the splendid things which were in their city, and about the king, and what a pretty princess the king's daughter was.

‘Where can one get to see her?’ asked the soldier.

‘She is not to be seen at all,’ said they all together; she lives in a great copper castle, with a great many walls

and towers round about it ; no one but the king may go in and out there, for it has been prophesied that she shall marry a common soldier, and the king can't bear that.'

'I should like to see her,' thought the soldier ; but he could not get leave to do so. Now he lived merrily, went to the theatre, drove in the king's garden, and gave much money to the poor ; and this was very kind of him, for he knew from old times how hard it is when one has not a shilling. Now he was rich, had fine clothes, and gained many friends, who all said he was a rare one, a true cavalier ; and that pleased the soldier well. But as he spent money every day and never earned any, he had at last only two shillings left ; and he was obliged to turn out of the fine rooms in which he had dwelt, and had to live in a little garret under the roof, and clean his boots for himself, and mend them with a darning-needle. None of his friends came to see him, for there were too many stairs to climb.

It was quite dark one evening, and he could not even buy himself a candle, when it occurred to him that there was a candle-end in the tinder-box which he had taken out of the hollow tree into which the witch had helped him. He brought out the tinder-box and the candle-end ; but as soon as he struck fire and the sparks rose up from the flint, the door flew open, and the dog who had eyes as big as a couple of tea-cups, and whom he had seen in the tree, stood before him, and said,

'What are my lord's commands ?'

'What is this ?' said the soldier. 'That's a famous tinder-box, if I can get everything with it that I want ! Bring me some money,' said he to the dog ; and *whisk!* the dog was gone, and *whisk!* he was back again, with a great bag full of shillings in his mouth.

Now the soldier knew what a capital tinder-box this was. If he struck it once, the dog came who sat upon the chest of copper money ; if he struck it twice, the dog came who had the silver ; and if he struck it three times, then appeared the dog who had the gold. Now the soldier moved back into the fine rooms, and appeared again in handsome clothes ; and all his friends knew him again, and cared very much for him indeed.

Once he thought to himself, 'It is a very strange thing that one cannot get to see the princess. They all say she is very beautiful; but what is the use of that, if she has always to sit in the great copper castle with the many towers? Can I not get to see her at all? Where is my tinder-box?' And so he struck a light, and *whisk!* came the dog with eyes as big as tea-cups.

'It is midnight, certainly,' said the soldier, 'but I should very much like to see the princess, only for one little moment.'

The dog was outside the door directly, and, before the soldier thought it, came back with the princess. She sat upon the dog's back and slept; and every one could see she was a real princess, for she was so lovely. The soldier could not refrain from kissing her, for he was a thorough soldier. Then the dog ran back again with the princess. But when morning came, and the king and queen were drinking tea, the princess said she had had a strange dream the night before, about a dog and a soldier—that she had ridden upon the dog, and the soldier had kissed her.

'That would be a fine history!' said the Queen.

So one of the old court ladies had to watch the next night by the princess's bed, to see if this was really a dream, or what it might be.

The soldier had a great longing to see the lovely princess again; so the dog came in the night, took her away, and ran as fast as he could. But the old lady put on water-boots, and ran just as fast after him. When she saw that they both entered a great house, she thought, 'Now I know where it is;' and with a bit of chalk she drew a great cross on the door. Then she went home and lay down, and the dog came up with the princess; but when he saw that there was a cross drawn on the door where the soldier lived, he took a piece of chalk too, and drew crosses on all the doors in the town. And that was cleverly done, for now the lady could not find the right door, because all the doors had crosses upon them.

In the morning early came the King and the Queen, the old court lady and all the officers, to see where it was the princess had been. 'Here it is!' said the King, when

he saw the first door with a cross upon it. 'No, my dear husband, it is there !' said the Queen, who descried another door which also showed a cross. 'But *there* is one, and *there* is one !' said all, for wherever they looked there were crosses on the doors. So they saw that it would avail them nothing if they searched on.

But the Queen was an exceedingly clever woman, who could do more than ride in a coach. She took her great gold scissors, cut a piece of silk into pieces, and made a neat little bag ; this bag she filled with fine wheat flour, and tied it on the princess's back ; and when that was done, she cut a little hole in the bag, so that the flour would be scattered along all the way which the princess should take.

In the night the dog came again, took the princess on his back, and ran with her to the soldier, who loved her very much, and would gladly have been a prince, so that he might have her for his wife. The dog did not notice at all how the flour ran out in a stream from the castle to the windows of the soldier's house, where he ran up the wall with the princess. In the morning the King and the Queen saw well enough where their daughter had been, and they took the soldier and put him in prison.

There he sat. Oh, but it was dark and disagreeable there ! And they said to him, 'To-morrow you shall be hanged.' That was not amusing to hear, and he had left his tinder-box at the inn. In the morning he could see, through the iron grating of the little window, how the people were hurrying out of the town to see him hanged. He heard the drums beat and saw the soldiers marching. All the people were running out, and among them was a shoemaker's boy with leather apron and slippers, and he galloped so fast that one of his slippers flew off, and came right against the wall where the soldier sat looking through the iron grating.

'Halloo, you shoemaker's boy ! you needn't be in such a hurry,' cried the soldier to him : 'it will not begin till I come. But if you will run to where I lived, and bring me my tinder-box, you shall have four shillings ; but you must put your best leg foremost.'

The shoemaker's boy wanted to get the four shillings, so

he went and brought the tinder-box, and—well, we shall hear now what happened.

Outside the town a great gallows had been built, and round it stood the soldiers and many hundred thousand people. The king and queen sat on a splendid throne, opposite to the judges and the whole council. The soldier already stood upon the ladder ; but as they were about to put the rope round his neck, he said that before a poor criminal suffered his punishment an innocent request was always granted to him. He wanted very much to smoke a pipe of tobacco, and it would be the last pipe he should smoke in the world. The king would not say ‘No’ to this ; so the soldier took his tinder-box, and struck fire. One—two—three !—and there suddenly stood all the dogs—the one with eyes as big as tea-cups, the one with eyes as large as mill-wheels, and the one whose eyes were as big as the round tower.

‘Help me now, so that I may not be hanged,’ said the soldier.

And the dogs fell upon the judge and all the council, seized one by the leg and another by the nose, and tossed them all many feet into the air, so that they fell down and were all broken to pieces.

‘I won’t !’ cried the King ; but the biggest dog took him and the Queen, and threw them after the others. Then the soldiers were afraid, and the people cried, ‘Little soldier, you shall be our king, and marry the beautiful princess !’

So they put the soldier into the king’s coach, and all the three dogs danced in front and cried ‘Hurrah !’ and the boys whistled through their fingers, and the soldiers presented arms. The princess came out of the copper castle, and became queen, and she liked that well enough. The wedding lasted a week, and the three dogs sat at the table too, and opened their eyes wider than ever at all they saw.

GREAT CLAUS AND LITTLE CLAUS

THERE lived two men in one village, and they had the same name—each was called Claus; but one had four horses, and the other only a single horse. To distinguish them from each other, folks called him who had four horses Great Claus, and the one who had only a single horse Little Claus. Now we shall hear what happened to each of them, for this is a true story.

The whole week through, Little Claus was obliged to plough for Great Claus, and to lend him his one horse; then Great Claus helped him out with all his four, but only once a week, and that was on Sunday. Hurrah! how Little Claus smacked his whip over all five horses, for they were as good as his own on that one day. The sun shone gaily, and all the bells in the steeples were ringing; the people were all dressed in their best, and were going to church, with their hymn-books under their arms, to hear the clergyman preach, and they saw Little Claus ploughing with five horses; but he was so merry that he smacked his whip again and again, and cried, ‘Gee up, all my five!’

‘You must not talk so,’ said Great Claus, ‘for only one horse is yours.’

But when any one passed Little Claus forgot that he was not to say this, and he cried, ‘Gee up, all my horses!’

‘Now, I must beg of you to stop that,’ cried Great Claus, ‘for if you say it again, I shall hit your horse on the head, so that it will fall down dead, and then it will be all over with him.’

‘I will certainly not say it any more,’ said Little Claus.

But when people came by soon afterwards, and nodded ‘good day’ to him, he became very glad, and thought it looked very well, after all, that he had five horses to plough his field; and so he smacked his whip again, and cried, ‘Gee up, all my horses!’

‘I’ll “gee up” your horses!’ said Great Claus. And he took a mallet and hit the only horse of Little Claus on the head, so that it fell down, and was dead immediately.

‘Oh, now I haven’t any horse at all!’ said Little Claus, and began to cry.

Then he flayed the horse, and let the hide dry in the wind, and put it in a sack and hung it over his shoulder, and went to the town to sell his horse's skin.

He had a very long way to go, and was obliged to pass through a great dark wood, and the weather became dreadfully bad. He went quite astray, and before he got into the right way again it was evening, and it was too far to get home again or even to the town before nightfall.

Close by the road stood a large farm-house. The shutters were closed outside the windows, but the light could still be seen shining out over them.

'I may be able to get leave to stop here through the night,' thought Little Claus; and he went and knocked.

The farmer's wife opened the door; but when she heard what he wanted she told him to go away, declaring that her husband was not at home, and she would not receive strangers.

'Then I shall have to lie outside,' said Little Claus. And the farmer's wife shut the door in his face.

Close by stood a great haystack, and between this and the farm-house was a little outhouse thatched with straw.

'Up there I can lie,' said Little Claus, when he looked up at the roof; 'that is a capital bed. I suppose the stork won't fly down and bite me in the legs.' For a living stork was standing on the roof, where he had his nest.

Now Little Claus climbed up to the roof of the shed, where he lay, and turned round to settle himself comfortably. The wooden shutters did not cover the windows at the top, and he could look straight into the room. There was a great table, with the cloth laid, and wine and roast meat and a glorious fish upon it. The farmer's wife and the parish-clerk were seated at table, and nobody besides. She was filling his glass, and he was digging his fork into the fish, for that was his favourite dish.

'If one could only get some too!' thought Little Claus, as he stretched out his head towards the window. Heavens! what a glorious cake he saw standing there! Yes, certainly, that *was* a feast.

Now he heard some one riding along the high road. It was the woman's husband, who was coming home. He was a good man enough, but he had the strange peculiarity

that he could never bear to see a clerk. If a clerk appeared before his eyes he became quite wild. And that was the reason why the clerk had gone to the wife to wish her good day, because he knew that her husband was not at home ; and the good woman therefore put the best fare she had before him. But when they heard the man coming they were frightened, and the woman begged the clerk to creep into a great empty chest which stood in the corner ; and he did so, for he knew the husband could not bear the sight of a clerk. The woman quickly hid all the excellent meat and wine in her baking-oven ; for if the man had seen that, he would have been certain to ask what it meant.

‘ Oh, dear ! ’ sighed Little Claus, up in his shed, when he saw all the good fare put away.

‘ Is there any one up there ? ’ asked the farmer ; and he looked up at Little Claus. ‘ Why are you lying there ? Better come with me into the room.’

And Little Claus told him how he had lost his way, and asked leave to stay there for the night.

‘ Yes, certainly,’ said the peasant, ‘ but first we must have something to live on.’

The woman received them both in a very friendly way, spread the cloth on a long table, and gave them a great dish of porridge. The farmer was hungry, and ate with a good appetite ; but Little Claus could not help thinking of the capital roast meat, fish, and cake, which he knew were in the oven. Under the table, at his feet, he had laid the sack with the horse’s hide in it ; for we know that he had come out to sell it in the town. He could not relish the porridge, so he trod upon the sack, and the dry skin inside crackled quite loudly.

‘ Hush,’ said Little Claus to his sack ; but at the same time he trod on it again, so that it crackled much louder than before.

‘ Why, what have you in your sack ? ’ asked the farmer.

‘ Oh, that’s a magician,’ answered Little Claus. ‘ He says we are not to eat porridge, for he has conjured the oven full of roast meat, fish, and cake.’

‘ Wonderful ! ’ cried the farmer ; and he opened the oven in a hurry, and found all the dainty provisions which

his wife had hidden there, but which, as he thought, the wizard had conjured forth. The woman dared not say anything, but put the things at once on the table ; and so they both ate of the meat, the fish, and the cake. Now Little Claus again trod on his sack, and made the hide creak.

‘What does he say now ?’ said the farmer.

‘He says,’ replied Claus, ‘that he has conjured three bottles of wine for us, too, and that they are also standing there in the oven.’

Now the woman was obliged to bring out the wine which she had hidden, and the farmer drank it and became very merry. He would have been very glad to own such a conjuror as Little Claus had there in the sack.

‘Can he conjure the demon forth ?’ asked the farmer. ‘I should like to see him, for now I am merry.’

‘Oh, yes,’ said Little Claus, ‘my conjuror can do anything that I ask of him.—Can you not ?’ he added, and trod on the hide, so that it crackled. ‘He says “Yes.” But the demon is very ugly to look at : we had better not see him.’

‘Oh, I’m not at all afraid. Pray, what will he look like ?’

‘Why, he’ll look the very image of a parish-clerk.’

‘Ha !’ said the farmer, ‘that is ugly ! You must know, I can’t bear the sight of a clerk. But it doesn’t matter now, for I know that he’s a demon, so I shall easily stand it. Now I have courage, but he must not come too near me.’

‘Now I will ask my conjuror,’ said Little Claus ; and he trod on the sack and held his ear down.

‘What does he say ?’

‘He says you may go and open the chest that stands in the corner, and you will see the demon crouching in it ; but you must hold the lid so that he doesn’t slip out.’

‘Will you help me to hold him ?’ asked the farmer. And he went to the chest where the wife had hidden the real clerk, who sat in there and was very much afraid. The farmer opened the lid a little way and peeped in underneath it.

‘Ugh !’ he cried, and sprang backward. ‘Yes, now I’ve

seen him, and he looked exactly like our clerk. Oh, that was dreadful !’

Upon this they must drink. So they sat and drank until late into the night.

‘You must sell me that conjuror,’ said the farmer.



‘Ask as much as you like for him : I’ll give you a whole bushel of money directly.’

‘No, that I can’t do,’ said Little Claus : ‘only think how much use I can make of this conjuror.’

‘Oh, I should so much like to have him !’ cried the farmer ; and he went on begging.

‘Well,’ said Little Claus, at last, ‘as you have been so kind as to give me shelter for the night, I will let it be so.

You shall have the conjuror for a bushel of money ; but I must have the bushel heaped up.'

'That you shall have,' replied the farmer. 'But you must take the chest yonder away with you. I will not keep it in my house an hour. One cannot know—perhaps he may be there still.'

Little Claus gave the farmer his sack with the dry hide in it, and got in exchange a whole bushel of money, and that heaped up. The farmer also gave him a big truck, on which to carry off his money and chest.

'Farewell !' said Little Claus ; and he went off with his money and the big chest, in which the clerk was still sitting.

On the other side of the wood was a great deep river. The water rushed along so rapidly that one could scarcely swim against the stream. A fine new bridge had been built over it. Little Claus stopped on the centre of the bridge, and said quite loud, so that the clerk could hear it,

'Ho, what shall I do with this stupid chest ? It's as heavy as if stones were in it. I shall only get tired if I drag it any farther, so I'll throw it into the river : if it swims home to me, well and good ; and if it does not, it will be no great matter.'

And he took the chest with one hand, and lifted it up a little, as if he intended to throw it into the river.

'No ! let be !' cried the clerk from within the chest ; 'let me out first !'

'Ugh !' exclaimed Little Claus, pretending to be frightened, 'he's in there still ! I must make haste and throw him into the river, that he may be drowned.'

'Oh, no, no !' screamed the clerk. 'I'll give you a whole bushel-full of money if you'll let me go.'

'Why, that's another thing !' said Little Claus ; and he opened the chest.

The clerk crept quickly out, pushed the empty chest into the water, and went to his house, where Little Claus received a whole bushel-full of money. He had already received one from the farmer, and so now he had his truck loaded with money.

'See, I've been well paid for the horse,' he said to himself when he had got home to his own room, and was

emptying all the money into a heap in the middle of the floor. 'That will vex Great Claus when he hears how rich I have grown through my one horse ; but I won't tell him about it outright.'

So he sent a boy to Great Claus to ask for a bushel measure.

'What can he want with it ?' thought Great Claus. And he smeared some tar underneath the measure, so that some part of whatever was measured should stick to it. And thus it happened ; for when he received the measure back, there were three new threepenny pieces adhering thereto.

'What's this ?' cried Great Claus ; and he ran off at once to Little Claus. 'Where did you get all that money from ?'

'Oh, that's for my horse's skin. I sold it yesterday evening.'

'That's really being well paid,' said Great Claus. And he ran home in a hurry, took an axe, and killed all his four horses ; then he flayed them, and carried off their skins to the town.

'Hides ! hides ! who'll buy any hides ?' he cried through the streets.

All the shoemakers and tanners came running, and asked how much he wanted for them.

'A bushel of money for each !' said Great Claus.

'Are you mad ?' said they. 'Do you think we have money by the bushel ?'

'Hides ! hides !' he cried again ; and to all who asked him what the hides would cost he replied, 'A bushel of money.'

'He wants to make fools of us,' they all exclaimed. And the shoemakers took their straps, and the tanners their aprons, and they began to beat Great Claus.

'Hides ! hides !' they called after him, jeeringly. 'Yes, we'll tan your hide for you till the red broth runs down. Out of the town with him !' And Great Claus made the best haste he could, for he had never yet been thrashed as he was thrashed now.

'Well,' said he when he got home, 'Little Claus shall pay for this. I'll kill him for it.'

Now, at Little Claus's the old grandmother had died. She had been very harsh and unkind to him, but yet he was very sorry, and took the dead woman and laid her in his warm bed, to see if she would not come to life again. There he intended she should remain all through the night, and he himself would sit in the corner and sleep on a chair, as he had often done before. As he sat there, in the night the door opened, and Great Claus came in with his axe. He knew where Little Claus's bed stood; and, going straight up to it, he hit the old grandmother on the head, thinking she was Little Claus.

'D'ye see,' said he, 'you shall not make a fool of me again.' And then he went home.

'That's a bad fellow, that man,' said Little Claus. 'He wanted to kill me. It was a good thing for my old grandmother that she was dead already. He would have taken her life.'

And he dressed his grandmother in her Sunday clothes, borrowed a horse of his neighbour, harnessed it to a car, and put the old lady on the back seat, so that she could not fall out when he drove. And so they trundled through the wood. When the sun rose they were in front of an inn; there Little Claus pulled up, and went in to have some refreshment.

The host had very, very much money; he was also a very good man, but exceedingly hot-tempered, as if he had pepper and tobacco in him.

'Good morning,' said he to Little Claus. 'You've put on your Sunday clothes early to-day.'

'Yes,' answered Little Claus; 'I'm going to town with my old grandmother: she's sitting there on the car without. I can't bring her into the room—will you give her a glass of mead? But you must speak very loud, for she can't hear well.'

'Yes, that I will,' said the host. And he poured out a great glass of mead, and went out with it to the dead grandmother, who had been placed upright in the carriage.

'Here's a glass of mead from your son,' quoth mine host. But the dead woman replied not a word, but sat quite still. 'Don't you hear?' cried the host, as loud as he could, 'here is a glass of mead from your son!'

Once more he called out the same thing, but as she still made not a movement, he became angry at last, and threw the glass in her face, so that the mead ran down over her nose, and she tumbled backwards into the car, for she had only been put upright, and not bound fast.

‘Hallo!’ cried Little Claus, running out at the door, and seizing the host by the breast; ‘you’ve killed my grandmother now! See, there’s a big hole in her forehead.’

‘Oh, here’s a misfortune!’ cried the host, wringing his hands. ‘That all comes of my hot temper. Dear Little Claus, I’ll give you a bushel of money, and have your grandmother buried as if she were my own; only keep quiet, or I shall have my head cut off, and that would be so very disagreeable!’

So Little Claus again received a whole bushel of money, and the host buried the old grandmother as if she had been his own. And when Little Claus came home with all his money, he at once sent his boy to Great Claus to ask to borrow a bushel measure.

‘What’s that?’ said Great Claus. ‘Have I not killed him? I must go myself and see to this.’ And so he went over himself with the bushel to Little Claus.

‘Now, where did you get all that money from?’ he asked; and he opened his eyes wide when he saw all that had been brought together.

‘You killed my grandmother, and not me,’ replied Little Claus; ‘and I’ve been and sold her, and got a whole bushel of money for her.’

‘That’s really being well paid,’ said Great Claus; and he hastened home, took an axe, and killed his own grandmother directly. Then he put her on a carriage, and drove off to the town with her, to where the apothecary lived, and asked him if he would buy a dead person.

‘Who is it, and where did you get him from?’ asked the apothecary.

‘It’s my grandmother,’ answered Great Claus. ‘I’ve killed her to get a bushel of money for her.’

‘Heaven save us!’ cried the apothecary, ‘you’re raving! Don’t say such things, or you may lose your head.’ And he told him earnestly what a bad deed this was that he

had done, and what a bad man he was, and that he must be punished. And Great Claus was so frightened that he jumped out of the surgery straight into his carriage, and whipped the horses, and drove home. But the apothecary and all the people thought him mad, and so they let him drive whither he would.

‘ You shall pay for this ! ’ said Great Claus, when he was out upon the high road : ‘ yes, you shall pay me for this, Little Claus ! ’ And directly he got home he took the biggest sack he could find, and went over to Little Claus and said, ‘ Now, you’ve tricked me again ! First I killed my horses, and then my old grandmother ! That ’s all your fault ; but you shall never trick me any more.’ And he seized Little Claus round the body, and thrust him into the sack, and took him upon his back, and called out to him, ‘ Now I shall go off with you and drown you.’

It was a long way that he had to travel before he came to the river, and Little Claus was not too light to carry. The road led him close to a church : the organ was playing, and the people were singing so beautifully ! Then Great Claus put down his sack, with Little Claus in it, close to the church door, and thought it would be a very good thing to go in and hear a psalm before he went farther ; for Little Claus could not get out, and all the people were in church ; and so he went in.

‘ Oh, dear ! Oh, dear ! ’ sighed Little Claus in the sack. And he turned and twisted, but he found it impossible to loosen the cord. Then there came by an old drover with snow-white hair, and a great staff in his hand : he was driving a whole herd of cows and oxen before him, and they stumbled against the sack in which Little Claus was confined, so that it was overthrown.

‘ Oh, dear ! ’ sighed Little Claus, ‘ I’m so young yet, and am to go to heaven directly ! ’

‘ And I, poor fellow,’ said the drover, ‘ am so old already, and can’t get there yet ! ’

‘ Open the sack,’ cried Little Claus ; ‘ creep into it instead of me, and you will get to heaven directly.’

‘ With all my heart,’ replied the drover ; and he untied the sack, out of which Little Claus crept forth immediately.

‘ But will you look after the cattle ? ’ said the old man ;

and he crept into the sack at once, whereupon Little Claus tied it up, and went his way with all the cows and oxen.

Soon afterwards Great Claus came out of the church. He took the sack on his shoulders again, although it seemed to him as if the sack had become lighter ; for the old drover was only half as heavy as Little Claus.

‘How light he is to carry now ! Yes, that is because I have heard a psalm.’

So he went to the river, which was deep and broad, threw the sack with the old drover in it into the water, and called after him, thinking that it was little Claus, ‘You lie there ! Now you shan’t trick me any more !’

Then he went home ; but when he came to a place where there was a cross-road, he met Little Claus driving all his beasts.

‘What’s this ?’ cried Great Claus. ‘Have I not drowned you ?’

‘Yes,’ replied Little Claus, ‘you threw me into the river less than half an hour ago.’

‘But wherever did you get all those fine beasts from ?’ asked Great Claus.

‘These beasts are sea-cattle,’ replied Little Claus. ‘I’ll tell you the whole story,—and thank you for drowning me, for now I’m at the top of the tree. I am really rich ! How frightened I was when I lay huddled in the sack, and the wind whistled about my ears when you threw me down from the bridge into the cold water ! I sank to the bottom immediately ; but I did not knock myself, for the most splendid soft grass grows down there. Upon that I fell ; and immediately the sack was opened, and the loveliest maiden, with snow-white garments and a green wreath upon her wet hair, took me by the hand, and said, “Are you come, Little Claus ? Here you have some cattle to begin with. A mile farther along the road there is a whole herd more, which I will give to you.” And now I saw that the river formed a great highway for the people of the sea. Down in its bed they walked and drove directly from the sea, and straight into the land, to where the river ends. There it was so beautifully full of flowers and of the freshest grass ; the fishes, which swam in the water, shot past my ears, just as here the birds in the air. What pretty people

there were there, and what fine cattle pasturing on mounds and in ditches ! ’

‘ But why did you come up again to us directly ? ’ asked Great Claus. ‘ I should not have done that, if it is so beautiful down there. ’

‘ Why, ’ replied Little Claus, ‘ just in that I acted with good policy. You heard me tell you that the sea-maiden said, “ A mile farther along the road ”—and by the road she meant the river, for she can’t go anywhere else—“ there



is a whole herd of cattle for you.” But I know what bends the stream makes—sometimes this way, sometimes that ; there’s a long way to go round : no, the thing can be managed in a shorter way by coming here to the land, and driving across the fields towards the river again. In this manner I save myself almost half a mile, and get all the quicker to my sea-cattle ! ’

‘ Oh, you are a fortunate man ! ’ said Great Claus. ‘ Do you think I should get some sea-cattle too if I went down to the bottom of the river ? ’

‘ Yes, I think so, ’ replied Little Claus. ‘ But I cannot carry you in the sack as far as the river ; you are too heavy

for me ! But if you will go there, and creep into the sack yourself, I will throw you in with a great deal of pleasure.'

'Thanks !' said Great Claus ; ' but if I don't get any sea-cattle when I am down there, I shall beat you, you may be sure !'

' Oh, no ; don't be so fierce !'

And so they went together to the river. When the beasts, which were thirsty, saw the stream, they ran as fast as they could to get at the water.

' See how they hurry !' cried Little Claus. ' They are longing to get back to the bottom.'

' Yes, but help me first !' said Great Claus, ' or else you shall be beaten.'

And so he crept into the great sack, which had been laid across the back of one of the oxen.

' Put a stone in, for I'm afraid I shan't sink else,' said Great Claus.

' That will be all right,' replied Little Claus ; and he put a big stone into the sack, tied the rope tightly, and pushed against it. *Plump !* There lay Great Claus in the river, and sank at once to the bottom.

' I'm afraid he won't find the cattle !' said Little Claus ; and then he drove homeward with what he had.

THE PRINCESS ON THE PEA

THERE was once a Prince who wanted to marry a princess ; but she was to be a *real* princess. So he travelled about, all through the world, to find a real one, but everywhere there was something in the way. There were princesses enough, but whether they were *real* princesses he could not quite make out : there was always something that did not seem quite right. So he came home again, and was quite sad ; for he wished so much to have a real princess.

One evening a terrible storm came on. It lightened and thundered, the rain streamed down ; it was quite fearful ! Then there was a knocking at the town-gate, and the old King went out to open it.

It was a Princess who stood outside the gate. But, mercy ! how she looked, from the rain and the rough weather ! The water ran down her hair and her clothes ; it ran in at the points of her shoes, and out at the heels ; and yet she declared that she was a real princess.

‘ Yes, we will soon find that out,’ thought the old Queen. But she said nothing, only went into the bed-chamber, took all the bedding off, and put a pea on the bottom of the bedstead ; then she took twenty mattresses and laid them upon the pea, and then twenty eider-down quilts upon the mattresses. On this the Princess had to lie all night. In the morning she was asked how she had slept.

‘ Oh, miserably ! ’ said the Princess. ‘ I scarcely closed my eyes all night long. Goodness knows what was in my bed. I lay upon something hard, so that I am black and blue all over. It is quite dreadful ! ’

Now they saw that she was a real princess, for through the twenty mattresses and the twenty eider-down quilts she had felt the pea. No one but a real princess could be so tender-skinned.

So the Prince took her for his wife, for now he knew that he had a true princess ; and the pea was put in the museum, and it is still to be seen there, unless somebody has carried it off.

(Look you, this is a true story.)

LITTLE IDA'S FLOWERS

‘ My poor flowers are quite dead ! ’ said little Ida. ‘ They were so pretty yesterday evening, and now all the leaves hang withered. Why do they do that ? ’ she asked the student, who sat on the sofa ; for she liked him very much. He knew the prettiest stories, and could cut out the most amusing pictures—hearts, with little ladies in them who danced, flowers, and great castles in which one could open the doors : he was a merry student. ‘ Why do the flowers look so faded to-day ? ’ she asked again, and showed him a whole bouquet, which was quite withered.

‘ Do you know what’s the matter with them ? ’ said the

student. 'The flowers have been at a ball last night, and that 's why they hang their heads.'

'But flowers cannot dance !' cried little Ida.

'Oh, yes,' said the student, 'when it grows dark, and we are asleep, they jump about merrily. Almost every night they have a ball.'

'Can no children go to this ball ?'

'Yes,' said the student, 'quite little daisies, and lilies of the valley.'

'Where do the most beautiful flowers dance ?' asked little Ida.

'Have you not often been outside the town-gate, by the great castle, where the king lives in summer, and where the beautiful garden is, with all the flowers ? You have seen the swans, which swim up to you when you want to give them bread crumbs ? There are capital balls there, believe me.'

'I was out there in the garden yesterday, with my mother,' said Ida ; 'but all the leaves were off the trees, and there was not one flower left. Where are they ? In the summer I saw so many.'

'They are within, in the castle,' replied the student. 'You must know, as soon as the king and all the court go to town, the flowers run out of the garden into the castle, and are merry. You should see that. The two most beautiful roses seat themselves on the throne, and then they are king and queen ; all the red coxcombs range themselves on either side, and stand and bow ; they are the chamberlains. Then all the pretty flowers come, and there is a great ball. The blue violets represent little naval cadets : they dance with hyacinths and crocuses, which they call young ladies ; the tulips and the great tiger-lilies are old ladies who keep watch that the dancing is well done, and that everything goes on with propriety.'

'But,' asked little Ida, 'does nobody do anything to the flowers, for dancing in the king's castle ?'

'There is nobody who really knows about it,' answered the student. 'Sometimes, certainly, the old steward of the castle comes at night, and he has to watch there. He has a great bunch of keys with him ; but as soon as the flowers hear the keys rattle they are quite quiet, hide behind the

long curtains, and only poke their heads out. Then the old steward says, "I smell that there are flowers here," but he cannot see them.'

'That is famous!' cried little Ida, clapping her hands. But should not I be able to see the flowers?'

'Yes,' said the student; 'only remember, when you go out again, to peep through the window; then you will see them. That is what I did to-day. There was a long yellow lily lying on the sofa and stretching herself. She imagined herself to be a court lady.'

'Can the flowers out of the Botanical Garden get there? Can they go the long distance?'

'Yes, certainly,' replied the student; 'if they like they can fly. Have you not seen the beautiful butterflies, red, yellow, and white? They almost look like flowers; and that is what they have been. They have flown off their stalks high into the air, and have beaten it with their leaves, as if these leaves were little wings, and thus they flew. And because they behaved themselves well, they got leave to fly about in the day-time too, and were not obliged to go home again and to sit still upon their stalks; and thus at last the leaves became real wings. That you have seen yourself. It may be, however, that the flowers in the Botanical Garden have never been in the king's castle, or that they don't know of the merry proceedings there at night. Therefore I will tell you something: he will be very much surprised, the botanical professor, who lives close by here. You know him, do you not? When you come into his garden, you must tell one of the flowers that there is a great ball yonder in the castle. Then that flower will tell it to all the rest, and then they will fly away: if the professor then comes out into the garden, there will not be a single flower left, and he won't be able to make out where they are gone.'

'But how can one flower tell it to another? For, you know, flowers cannot speak.'

'That they cannot, certainly,' replied the student; 'but then they make signs. Have you not noticed that when the wind blows a little, the flowers nod at one another, and move all their green leaves? They can understand that just as well as if they talked.'

'Can the professor understand these signs?' asked Ida.

'Yes, certainly. He came one morning into his garden, and saw a great stinging-nettle standing there, and making signs to a beautiful red carnation with its leaves. It was saying, "You are so pretty, and I love you so much." But the professor does not like that kind of thing, and he directly slapped the stinging-nettle upon its leaves, for those are its fingers; but he stung himself, and since that time he has not dared to touch a stinging-nettle.'

'That was funny,' cried little Ida; and she laughed.

'How can any one put such notions into a child's head?' said the tiresome privy councillor, who had come to pay a visit, and was sitting on the sofa. He did not like the student, and always grumbled when he saw him cutting out the comical funny pictures—sometimes a man hanging on a gibbet and holding a heart in his hand, to show that he stole hearts; sometimes an old witch riding on a broom, and carrying her husband on her nose. The councillor could not bear this, and then he said, just as he did now, 'How can any one put such notions into a child's head? Those are stupid fancies!'

But to little Ida, what the student told about her flowers seemed very entertaining; and she thought much about it. The flowers hung their heads, for they were tired because they had danced all night; they were certainly ill. Then she went with them to all her other toys, which stood on a pretty little table, and the whole drawer was full of beautiful things. In the doll's bed lay her doll Sophy, asleep; but little Ida said to her,

'You must really get up, Sophy, and manage to lie in the drawer for to-night. The poor flowers are ill, and they must lie in your bed; perhaps they will then get well again.'

And she at once took the doll out; but the doll looked cross, and did not say a single word; for she was angry because she could not keep her own bed.

Then Ida laid the flowers in the doll's bed, pulled the little coverlet quite up over them, and said they were to lie still and be good, and she would make them some tea, so that they might get well again, and be able to get up to-morrow. And she drew the curtains closely round the

little bed, so that the sun should not shine in their eyes. The whole evening through she could not help thinking of what the student had told her. And when she was going to bed herself, she was obliged first to look behind the curtain which hung before the windows where her mother's beautiful flowers stood—hyacinths as well as tulips; then she whispered quite softly, 'I know you're going to the ball to-night!' But the flowers made as if they did not understand a word, and did not stir a leaf; but still little Ida knew what she knew.

When she was in bed she lay for a long time thinking how pretty it must be to see the beautiful flowers dancing out in the king's castle. 'I wonder if my flowers have really been there?' And then she fell asleep. In the night she awoke again: she had dreamed of the flowers, and of the student with whom the councillor found fault. It was quite quiet in the bedroom where Ida lay; the night-lamp burned on the table, and father and mother were asleep.

'I wonder if my flowers are still lying in Sophy's bed?' she thought to herself. 'How I should like to know it!' She raised herself a little, and looked at the door, which stood ajar; within lay the flowers and all her playthings. She listened, and then it seemed to her as if she heard some one playing on the piano in the next room, but quite softly and prettily, as she had never heard it before.

'Now all the flowers are certainly dancing in there!' thought she. 'Oh, how much I should like to see it!' But she dared not get up, for she would have disturbed her father and mother.

'If they would only come in!' thought she. But the flowers did not come, and the music continued to play beautifully; then she could not bear it any longer, for it was too pretty; she crept out of her little bed, and went quietly to the door, and looked into the room. Oh, how splendid it was, what she saw!

There was no night-lamp burning, but still it was quite light: the moon shone through the window into the middle of the floor; it was almost like day. All the hyacinths and tulips stood in two long rows on the floor; there were none at all left at the window. There stood the

empty flower-pots. On the floor all the flowers were dancing very gracefully round each other, making a perfect chain, and holding each other by the long green leaves as they swung round. But at the piano sat a great yellow lily, which little Ida had certainly seen in summer, for she remembered how the student had said, 'How like that one is to Miss Lina.' Then he had been laughed at by all; but now it seemed really to little Ida as if the long yellow flower looked like the young lady; and it had just her manners in playing—sometimes bending its long yellow face to one side, sometimes to the other, and nodding in tune to the charming music! No one noticed little Ida. Then she saw a great blue crocus hop into the middle of the table, where the toys stood, and go to the doll's bed and pull the curtains aside; there lay the sick flowers, but they got up directly, and nodded to the others, to say that they wanted to dance too. The old chimney-sweep doll, whose under lip was broken off, stood up and bowed to the pretty flowers: these did not look at all ill now; they jumped down among the others, and were very merry.

Then it seemed as if something fell down from the table. Ida looked that way. It was the Shrovetide birch rod which was jumping down! it seemed almost as if it belonged to the flowers. At any rate it was very neat; and a little wax doll, with just such a broad hat on its head as the councillor wore, sat upon it. The birch rod hopped about among the flowers on its three red legs, and stamped quite loud, for it was dancing the mazurka; and the other flowers could not manage that dance, because they were too light, and unable to stamp like that.

The wax doll on the birch rod all at once became quite great and long, turned itself over the paper flowers, and said, 'How can one put such things in a child's head? Those are stupid fancies!' and then the wax doll was exactly like the councillor with the broad hat, and looked just as yellow and cross as he. But the paper flowers hit him on his thin legs, and then he shrank up again, and became quite a little wax doll. That was very amusing to see; and little Ida could not restrain her laughter. The birch rod went on dancing, and the councillor was obliged to dance too; it was no use whether he might make

himself great and long, or remained the little yellow wax doll with the big black hat. Then the other flowers put in a good word for him, especially those who had lain in the doll's bed, and then the birch rod gave over. At the same moment there was a loud knocking at the drawer, inside where Ida's doll, Sophy, lay with many other toys. The chimney-sweep ran to the edge of the table, lay flat down on his stomach, and began to pull the drawer out a little. Then Sophy raised herself, and looked round quite astonished.

'There must be a ball here,' said she; 'why did nobody tell me?'

'Will you dance with me?' asked the chimney-sweep.

'You are a nice sort of fellow to dance!' she replied, and turned her back upon him.

Then she seated herself upon the drawer, and thought that one of the flowers would come and ask her; but not one of them came. Then she coughed, 'Hem! hem! hem!' but for all that not one came. The chimney-sweep now danced all alone, and that was not at all so bad.

As none of the flowers seemed to notice Sophy, she let herself fall down from the drawer straight upon the floor, so that there was a great noise. The flowers now all came running up, to ask if she had not hurt herself; and they were all very polite to her, especially the flowers that had lain in her bed. But she had not hurt herself at all; and Ida's flowers all thanked her for the nice bed, and were kind to her, took her into the middle of the floor, where the moon shone in, and danced with her; and all the other flowers formed a circle round her. Now Sophy was glad, and said they might keep her bed; she did not at all mind lying in the drawer.

But the flowers said, 'We thank you heartily, but we cannot live so long. To-morrow we shall be quite dead. But tell little Ida she is to bury us out in the garden, where the canary lies; then we shall wake up again in summer, and be far more beautiful.'

'No, you must not die,' said Sophy; and she kissed the flowers.

At that moment the door opened, and a great number of splendid flowers came dancing in. Ida could not imagine

whence they had come ; these must certainly all be flowers from the king's castle yonder. First of all came two glorious roses, and they had little gold crowns on ; they were a king and a queen. Then came the prettiest stocks and carnations ; and they bowed in all directions. They had music with them. Great poppies and peonies blew upon pea-pods till they were quite red in the face. The blue hyacinths and the little white snowdrops rang just as if they had bells on them. That was wonderful music ! Then came many other flowers, and danced all together ; the blue violets and the pink primroses, daisies and the lilies of the valley. And all the flowers kissed one another. It was beautiful to look at !

At last the flowers wished one another good night ; then little Ida, too, crept to bed, where she dreamed of all she had seen.

When she rose next morning, she went quickly to the little table, to see if the flowers were still there. She drew aside the curtains of the little bed ; there were they all, but they were quite faded, far more than yesterday. Sophy was lying in the drawer where Ida had laid her ; she looked very sleepy.

'Do you remember what you were to say to me ?' asked little Ida.

But Sophy looked quite stupid, and did not say a single word.

'You are not good at all !' said Ida. 'And yet they all danced with you.'

Then she took a little paper box, on which were painted beautiful birds, and opened it, and laid the dead flowers in it.

'That shall be your pretty coffin,' said she, 'and when my Norwegian cousins come to visit me by and by, they shall help me to bury you outside in the garden, so that you may grow again in summer, and become more beautiful than ever.'

The Norwegian cousins were two smart boys. Their names were Jonas and Adolphe ; their father had given them two new crossbows, and they had brought these with them to show to Ida. She told them about the poor flowers which had died, and then they got leave to bury

them. The two boys went first, with their crossbows on their shoulders, and little Ida followed with the dead flowers in the pretty box. Out in the garden a little grave was dug. Ida first kissed the flowers, and then laid them in the earth in the box, and Adolphe and Jonas shot with their crossbows over the grave, for they had neither guns nor cannons.

THUMBELINA

THERE was once a woman who wished for a very little child ; but she did not know where she should procure one. So she went to an old witch, and said,

‘ I do so very much wish for a little child ! can you not tell me where I can get one ? ’

‘ Oh ! that could easily be managed,’ said the witch. ‘ There you have a barleycorn : that is not of the kind which grows in the countryman’s field, and which the chickens get to eat. Put it into a flower-pot, and you shall see what you shall see.’

‘ Thank you,’ said the woman ; and she gave the witch a groat.

Then she went home and planted the barleycorn, and immediately there grew up a great handsome flower, which looked like a tulip ; but the leaves were tightly closed, as though it were still a bud.

‘ It is a beautiful flower,’ said the woman ; and she kissed its beautiful yellow and red leaves. But just as she kissed it the flower opened with a loud crack. It was a real tulip, as one could now see ; but in the middle of the flower there sat upon the green stamens a little maiden, delicate and graceful to behold. She was scarcely half a thumb’s length in height, and therefore she was called Thumbelina.

A neat polished walnut-shell served Thumbelina for a cradle, blue violet-leaves were her mattresses, with a rose-leaf for a coverlet. There she slept at night ; but in the daytime she played upon the table, where the woman had put a plate with a wreath of flowers around it, whose stalks stood in water ; on the water swam a great

tulip-leaf, and on this the little maiden could sit, and row from one side of the plate to the other, with two white horse-hairs for oars. That looked pretty indeed! She could also sing, and, indeed, so delicately and sweetly, that the like had never been heard.

One night as she lay in her pretty bed, there came a horrid old Toad hopping in at the window, in which one pane was broken. The Toad was very ugly, big, and damp: it hopped straight down upon the table, where Thumbelina lay sleeping under the red rose-leaf.

‘That would be a handsome wife for my son,’ said the Toad; and she took the walnut-shell in which Thumbelina lay asleep, and hopped with it through the window down into the garden.

There ran a great broad brook; but the margin was swampy and soft, and here the Toad dwelt with her son. Ugh! he was ugly, and looked just like his mother. ‘Croak! croak! brek kek-kex!’ that was all he could say when he saw the graceful little maiden in the walnut-shell.

‘Don’t speak so loud, or she will awake,’ said the old Toad. ‘She might run away from us yet, for she is as light as a bit of swan’s-down. We will put her out in the brook upon one of the broad water-lily leaves. That will be just like an island for her, she is so small and light. Then she can’t get away, while we put the state-room under the mud in order, where you are to live and keep house together.’

Out in the brook there grew many water-lilies with broad green leaves, which looked as if they were floating on the water. The leaf which lay farthest out was also the greatest of all, and to that the old Toad swam out and laid the walnut-shell upon it with Thumbelina. The poor little thing woke early in the morning, and when she saw where she was, she began to cry very bitterly; for there was water on every side of the great green leaf, and she could not get to land at all. The old Toad sat down in the mud, decking out her room with sedges and yellow water-lilies—it was to be made very pretty for the new daughter-in-law; then she swam out, with her ugly son, to the leaf on which Thumbelina was. They wanted to take her pretty

bed, which was to be put in the bridal chamber before she went in there herself. The old Toad bowed low before her in the water, and said,

‘Here is my son ; he will be your husband, and you will live splendidly together in the mud.’

‘Croak ! croak ! brek-kek-kex !’ was all the son could say.

Then they took the elegant little bed, and swam away with it ; but Thumbelina sat all alone upon the green leaf and wept, for she did not like to live at the nasty Toad’s, and have her ugly son for a husband. The little fishes swimming in the water below had both seen the Toad, and had also heard what she said ; therefore they stretched forth their heads, for they wanted to see the little girl. So soon as they saw her they considered her so pretty that they felt very sorry she should have to go down to the ugly Toad. No, that must never be ! They assembled together in the water around the green stalk which held the leaf on which the little maiden stood, and with their teeth they gnawed away the stalk, and so the leaf swam down the stream ; and away went Thumbelina far away, where the Toad could not get at her.

Thumbelina sailed by many places, and the little birds which sat in the bushes saw her, and said, ‘What a lovely little girl !’ The leaf swam away with her, farther and farther ; so Thumbelina travelled out of the country.

A graceful little white butterfly continued to flutter round her, and at last alighted on the leaf. Thumbelina pleased him, and she was so delighted, for now the Toad could not reach her ; and it was so beautiful where she was floating along—the sun shone upon the water, it was just like shining gold. She took her girdle and bound one end of it round the butterfly, fastening the other end of the ribbon to the leaf. The leaf now glided onward much faster, and Thumbelina too, for she stood upon the leaf.

There came a big Cockchafer flying up ; and he saw her, and immediately clasped his claws round her slender waist, and flew with her up into a tree. The green leaf went swimming down the brook, and the butterfly with it ; for he was fastened to the leaf, and could not get away from it.

Mercy ! how frightened poor little Thumbelina was when

the Cockchafer flew with her up into the tree ! But especially she was sorry for the fine white butterfly whom she had bound fast to the leaf, for, if he could not free himself from it, he would be forced to starve to death. The Cockchafer, however, did not trouble himself at all about this. He seated himself with her upon the biggest green leaf of the tree, gave her the sweet part of the flowers to eat, and



declared that she was very pretty, though she did not in the least resemble a cockchafer. Afterwards came all the other cockchafers who lived in the tree to pay a visit : they looked at Thumbelina, and the lady cockchafers shrugged their feelers and said,

‘ Why, she has not even more than two legs !—that has a wretched appearance.’

‘ She has not any feelers ! ’ cried another.

‘ Her waist is quite slender—fie ! she looks like a human creature—how ugly she is ! ’ said all the lady cockchafers.

And yet Thumbelina was very pretty. Even the Cock-

chafer who had carried her off thought so ; but when all the others declared she was ugly, he believed it at last, and would not have her at all—she might go whither she liked. Then they flew down with her from the tree, and set her upon a daisy, and she wept, because she was so ugly that the cockchafers would not have her ; and yet she was the loveliest little being one could imagine, and as tender and delicate as a rose-leaf.

The whole summer through poor Thumbelina lived quite alone in the great wood. She wove herself a bed out of blades of grass, and hung it up under a large burdock leaf, so that she was protected from the rain ; she plucked the honey out of the flowers for food, and drank of the dew which stood every morning upon the leaves. Thus summer and autumn passed away ; but now came winter, the cold long winter. All the birds who had sung so sweetly to her flew away ; trees and flowers shed their leaves ; the great burdock leaf under which she had lived shrivelled up, and there remained nothing of it but a yellow withered stalk ; and she was dreadfully cold, for her clothes were torn, and she herself was so frail and delicate—poor little Thumbelina ! she was nearly frozen. It began to snow, and every snow-flake that fell upon her was like a whole shovel-full thrown upon one of us, for we are tall, and she was only an inch long. Then she wrapped herself in a dry leaf, but that would not warm her—she shivered with cold.

Close to the wood into which she had now come lay a great corn-field, but the corn was gone long ago ; only the naked dry stubble stood up out of the frozen ground. These were just like a great forest for her to wander through ; and, oh ! how she trembled with cold. Then she arrived at the door of the Field Mouse. This mouse had a little hole under the stubble. There the Field Mouse lived, warm and comfortable, and had a whole room-full of corn—a glorious kitchen and larder. Poor Thumbelina stood at the door just like a poor beggar girl, and begged for a little bit of a barleycorn, for she had not had the smallest morsel to eat for the last two days.

‘ You poor little creature,’ said the Field Mouse—for after all she was a good old Field Mouse—‘ come into my warm room and dine with me.’

As she was pleased with Thumbelina, she said, 'If you like you may stay with me through the winter, but you must keep my room clean and neat, and tell me stories, for I am very fond of them.'

And Thumbelina did as the kind old Field Mouse bade her, and had a very good time of it.

'Now we shall soon have a visitor,' said the Field Mouse. 'My neighbour is in the habit of visiting me once a week.'



He is even better off than I am, has great rooms, and a beautiful black velvety fur. If you could only get him for your husband you would be well provided for; but he cannot see at all. You must tell him the very prettiest stories you know.'

But Thumbelina did not care about this; she would not have the neighbour at all, for he was a Mole. He came and paid his visits in his black velvet coat. The Field Mouse told how rich and how learned he was, and how his house was more than twenty times larger than hers; that he had learning, but that he did not like the sun and

beautiful flowers, and said nasty things about them, for he had never seen them.

Thumbelina had to sing, and she sang 'Cockchafer, fly away,' and 'When the parson goes afield.' Then the Mole fell in love with her, because of her delicious voice ; but he said nothing, for he was a sedate man.

A short time before, he had dug a long passage through the earth from his own house to theirs ; and Thumbelina and the Field Mouse obtained leave to walk in this passage as much as they wished. But he begged them not to be afraid of the dead bird which was lying in the passage. It was an entire bird, with wings and a beak. It certainly must have died only a short time before, when the winter began, and was now buried just where the Mole had made his passage.

The Mole took a bit of decayed wood in his mouth, for that glimmers like fire in the dark ; and then he went first and lighted them through the long dark passage. When they came where the dead bird lay, the Mole thrust up his broad nose against the ceiling and pushed the earth, so that a great hole was made, through which the daylight could shine down. In the middle of the floor lay a dead Swallow, his beautiful wings pressed close against his sides, and his head and feet drawn in under his feathers : the poor bird had certainly died of cold. Thumbelina was very sorry for this ; she was very fond of all the little birds, who had sung and twittered so prettily for her through the summer ; but the Mole gave him a push with his short legs, and said, 'Now he doesn't pipe any more. It must be miserable to be born a little bird. I'm thankful that none of my children can be that : such a bird has nothing but his "tweet-tweet", and has to starve in the winter !'

'Yes, you may well say that, like a sensible man,' observed the Field Mouse. 'Of what use is all this "tweet-tweet" to a bird when the winter comes ? He must starve and freeze. But they say that's very aristocratic.'

Thumbelina said nothing ; but when the two others turned their backs on the bird, she bent down, put the feathers aside which covered his head, and kissed him upon his closed eyes.

'Perhaps it was he who sang so prettily to me in the

summer,' she thought. 'How much pleasure he gave me, the dear beautiful bird!'

The Mole now closed up the hole through which the daylight shone in, and accompanied the ladies home. But at night Thumbelina could not sleep at all; so she got up out of her bed, and wove a large beautiful carpet of hay, and carried it and spread it over the dead bird, and laid soft cotton, which she had found in the Field Mouse's room, at the bird's sides, so that he might lie warm in the cold ground.

'Farewell, you pretty little bird!' said she. 'Farewell! and thanks to you for your beautiful song in the summer, when all the trees were green, and the sun shone down warmly upon us.' And then she laid her head on the bird's breast, but at once was greatly startled, for it felt as if something were beating inside there. That was the bird's heart. The bird was not dead; he was only lying there torpid with cold; and now he had been warmed, and came to life again.

In autumn all the swallows fly away to warm countries, but if one happens to be belated, it becomes so cold that it falls down as if dead, and lies where it falls, and then the cold snow covers it.

Thumbelina fairly trembled, she was so startled; for the bird was large, very large, compared with her, who was only an inch in height. But she took courage, laid the cotton closer round the poor bird, and brought a leaf of mint that she had used as her own coverlet, and laid it over the bird's head.

The next night she crept out to him again—and now he was alive, but quite weak; he could only open his eyes for a moment, and look at Thumbelina, who stood before him with a bit of decayed wood in her hand, for she had no other lantern.

'I thank you, you pretty little child,' said the sick Swallow; 'I have been famously warmed. Soon I shall get my strength back again, and I shall be able to fly about in the warm sunshine.'

'Oh,' she said, 'it is so cold without. It snows and freezes. Stay in your warm bed, and I will nurse you.'

Then she brought the Swallow water in the petal of

a flower ; and the Swallow drank, and told her how he had torn one of his wings in a thorn bush, and thus had not been able to fly as fast as the other swallows, which had sped away, far away, to the warm countries. So at last he had fallen to the ground, but he could remember nothing more, and did not know at all how he had come where she had found him.

The whole winter the Swallow remained there, and Thumbelina nursed and tended him heartily. Neither the Field Mouse nor the Mole heard anything about it, for they did not like the poor Swallow. So soon as the spring came, and the sun warmed the earth, the Swallow bade Thumbelina farewell, and she opened the hole which the Mole had made in the ceiling. The sun shone in upon them gloriously, and the Swallow asked if Thumbelina would go with him ; she could sit upon his back, and they would fly away far into the green wood. But Thumbelina knew that the old Field Mouse would be grieved if she left her.

‘ No, I cannot ! ’ said Thumbelina.

‘ Farewell, farewell, you good, pretty girl ! ’ said the Swallow ; and he flew out into the sunshine. Thumbelina looked after him, and the tears came into her eyes, for she was so fond of the poor Swallow.

‘ Tweet-weet ! tweet-weet ! ’ sang the bird, and flew into the green forest. Thumbelina felt very sad. She did not get permission to go out into the warm sunshine. The corn which was sown in the field over the house of the Field Mouse grew up high into the air ; it was quite a thick wood for the poor girl, who was only an inch in height.

‘ Now you must work at your outfit this summer,’ said the Field Mouse to her ; for her neighbour, the tiresome Mole with the velvet coat, had proposed to her. ‘ You shall have woollen and linen clothes both ; you will lack nothing when you have become the Mole’s wife.’

Thumbelina had to turn the spindle, and the Mole hired four spiders to spin and weave for her day and night. Every evening the Mole paid her a visit ; and he was always saying that when the summer should draw to a close, the sun would not shine nearly so hot, for that now it burned the earth almost as hard as a stone. Yes, when the summer should have gone, then he would keep

his wedding day with Thumbelina. But she was not glad at all, for she did not like the tiresome Mole. Every morning when the sun rose, and every evening when it went down, she crept out at the door ; and when the wind blew the corn ears apart, so that she could see the blue sky, she thought how bright and beautiful it was out here, and wished so much to see her dear Swallow again. But the Swallow did not come back ; he had doubtless flown far away, in the fair green forest. When autumn came on, Thumbelina had all her outfit ready.

‘In four weeks you shall celebrate your wedding,’ said the Field Mouse to her.

But Thumbelina wept, and declared she would not have the tiresome Mole.

‘Nonsense,’ said the Field Mouse ; ‘don’t be obstinate, or I will bite you with my white teeth. He is a very fine man whom you will marry. The queen herself has not such a black velvet fur ; and his kitchen and cellar are full. Be thankful for your good fortune.’

Now the wedding was to be held. The Mole had already come to fetch Thumbelina ; she was to live with him, deep under the earth, and never to come out into the warm sunshine, for that he did not like. The poor little thing was very sorrowful ; she was now to say farewell to the glorious sun, which, after all, she had been allowed by the Field Mouse to see from the threshold of the door.

‘Farewell, thou bright sun !’ she said, and stretched out her arms towards it, and walked a little way forth from the house of the Field Mouse, for now the corn had been reaped, and only the dry stubble stood in the fields. ‘Farewell !’ she repeated, and threw her little arms round a little red flower which still bloomed there. ‘Greet the dear Swallow from me, if you see her again.’

‘Tweet-weet ! tweet-weet !’ a voice suddenly sounded over her head. She looked up ; it was the Swallow, who was just flying by. When he saw Thumbelina he was very glad ; and Thumbelina told him how loth she was to have the ugly Mole for her husband, and that she was to live deep under the earth, where the sun never shone. And she could not refrain from weeping.

‘The cold winter is coming now,’ said the Swallow ;

‘I am going to fly far away into the warm countries. Will you come with me? You can sit upon my back, only tie yourself fast with your sash, then we shall fly from the ugly Mole and his dark room—away, far away, over the mountains, to the warm countries, where the sun shines more beautifully than here, where it is always summer, and there are lovely flowers. Only fly with me, you dear little Thumbelina, you who saved my life when I lay frozen in the dark earthy passage.’

‘Yes, I will go with you!’ said Thumbelina, and she seated herself on the bird’s back, with her feet on his outspread wings, and bound her girdle fast to one of his strongest feathers; then the Swallow flew up into the air over forest and over sea, high up over the great mountains, where the snow always lies; and Thumbelina felt cold in the bleak air, but then she crept under the bird’s warm feathers, and only put out her little head to admire all the beauties beneath her.

At last they came to the warm countries. There the sun shone far brighter than here; the sky seemed twice as high; in ditches and on the hedges grew the most beautiful blue and green grapes; lemons and oranges hung in the woods; the air was fragrant with myrtles and balsams, and on the roads the loveliest children ran about, playing with the gay butterflies. But the Swallow flew still farther, and it became more and more beautiful. Under the most glorious green trees by the blue lake stood a palace of dazzling white marble, from the olden time. Vines clustered around the lofty pillars; at the top were many swallows’ nests, and in one of these the Swallow lived who carried Thumbelina.

‘Here is my house,’ said the Swallow. ‘But if you will select for yourself one of the splendid flowers which grow down yonder, then I will put you into it, and you shall have everything as nice as you can wish.’

‘That is capital,’ cried she, and clapped her little hands.

A great marble pillar lay there, which had fallen to the ground and had been broken into three pieces; but between these pieces grew the most beautiful great white flowers. The Swallow flew down with Thumbelina, and set her upon one of the broad leaves. But how great was the

little maid's surprise ! There sat a little man in the midst of the flower, as white and transparent as if he had been made of glass ; he wore the daintiest of gold crowns on his head, and the brightest wings on his shoulders ; he himself was not bigger than Thumbelina. He was the angel of the flower. In each of the flowers dwelt such a little man or woman, but this one was king over them all.

‘Heavens ! how beautiful he is !’ whispered Thumbelina to the Swallow.

The little prince was very much frightened at the Swallow ; for it was quite a gigantic bird to him, who was so small. But when he saw Thumbelina, he became very glad ; she was the prettiest maiden he had ever seen. Therefore he took off his golden crown, and put it upon her, asked her name, and if she would be his wife, and then she should be queen of all the flowers. Now this was truly a different kind of man to the son of the Toad, and the Mole with the black velvet fur. She therefore said ‘Yes’ to the charming prince. And out of every flower came a lady or a lord, so pretty to behold that it was a delight : each one brought Thumbelina a present ; but the best gift was a pair of beautiful wings which had belonged to a great white fly ; these were fastened to Thumbelina's back, and now she could fly from flower to flower. Then there was much rejoicing ; and the Swallow sat above them in her nest, and sung for them as well as she could ; but yet in her heart she was sad, for she was so fond of Thumbelina, and would have liked never to part from her.

‘You shall not be called Thumbelina !’ said the Flower Angel to her ; ‘that is an ugly name, and you are too fair for it—we will call you Maia.’

‘Farewell, farewell !’ said the Swallow, and she flew away again from the warm countries, far away back to Denmark. There she had a little nest over the window of the man who can tell fairy tales. To him she sang ‘Tweet-weet ! tweet-weet !’ and from him we have the whole story.

THE TRAVELLING COMPANION

POOR John was in great tribulation, for his father was very ill, and could not get well again. Except these two, there was no one at all in the little room : the lamp on the table was nearly extinguished, and it was quite late in the evening.

‘ You have been a good son, John,’ said the sick father. ‘ Providence will help you through the world.’ And he looked at him with mild earnest eyes, drew a deep breath, and died : it was just as if he slept. But John wept ; for now he had no one in the world, neither father nor mother, neither sister nor brother. Poor John ! He knelt down beside the bed, kissed his dead father’s hand, and shed very many salt tears ; but at last his eyes closed, and he went to sleep, lying with his head against the hard bed-board.

Then he dreamed a strange dream : he saw the sun and moon curtsy to him, and he beheld his father again, fresh and well, and he heard his father laugh as he had always laughed when he was very glad. A beautiful girl, with a golden crown upon her long beautiful hair, gave him her hand ; and his father said, ‘ Do you see what a bride you have gained ? She is the most beautiful in the whole world ! ’ Then he awoke, and all the splendour was gone. His father was lying dead and cold in the bed, and there was no one at all with them. Poor John !

In the next week the dead man was buried. The son walked close behind the coffin, and could now no longer see the good father who had loved him so much. He heard how they threw the earth down upon the coffin, and stopped to see the last corner of it ; but the next shovel-full of earth hid even that ; then he felt just as if his heart would burst into pieces, so sorrowful was he. Around him they were singing a psalm ; it sounded so beautifully, and the tears came into John’s eyes ; he wept, and that did him good in his sorrow. The sun shone magnificently on the green trees, just as if it would have said, ‘ You shall no longer be sorrowful, John ! Do you see how beautifully blue the sky is ? Your father is up there, and prays to the Father of all that it may be always well with you.’

‘I will always be good,’ said John, then I shall go to heaven to my father ; and what joy that will be when we see each other again ! How much I shall then have to tell him ! and he will show me so many things, and explain to me so much of the glories of heaven, just as he taught me here on earth. Oh, how joyful that will be !’

He pictured that to himself so plainly, that he smiled, while the tears were still rolling down his cheeks. The little birds sat up in the chestnut trees, and twittered, ‘Tweet-weet ! tweet-weet !’ They were joyful and merry, though they had been at the burying, but they knew quite well that the dead man was now in heaven ; that he had wings, far larger and more beautiful than theirs ; that he was now happy, because he had been a good man upon earth, and they were glad at it. John saw how they flew from the green trees out into the world, and he felt inclined to fly too. But first he cut out a great cross of wood to put on his father’s grave ; and when he brought it there in the evening the grave was decked with sand and flowers ; strangers had done this, for they were all very fond of the good father who was now dead.

Early next morning John packed his little bundle, and put in his belt his whole inheritance, which consisted of fifty dollars and a few silver shillings ; with this he intended to wander out into the world. But first he went to the churchyard, to his father’s grave, repeated the Lord’s Prayer, and said, ‘Farewell, dear father, I will always be good, and so you may well venture to pray to the good God that things may go well with me.’

Out in the field where he was walking all the flowers stood fresh and beautiful in the warm sunshine ; and they nodded in the wind, just as if they would have said, ‘Welcome to the green wood ! Is it not fine here ?’ But John turned back once more to look at the old church, in which he had been christened when he was a little child, and where he had been every Sunday with his father at the service, and had sung his psalm ; then, high up in one of the openings of the tower, he saw the church-goblin standing in his little pointed red cap, shading his face with his bent arm, to keep the sun from shining in his eyes. John nodded a farewell to him, and the little goblin waved

his red cap, laid his hand on his heart, and kissed his hand to John a great many times, to show that he wished the traveller well and hoped he would have a prosperous journey.

John thought what a number of fine things he would get to see in the great splendid world ; and he went on farther—farther than he had ever been before. He did not know the places at all through which he came, nor the people whom he met. Now he was far away in a strange region.

The first night he was obliged to lie under a haystack in the field to sleep, for he had no other bed. But that was very nice, he thought ; the king could not be better off. There was the whole field, with the brook, the haystack, and the blue sky above it ; that was certainly a beautiful sleeping-room. The green grass with the little red and white flowers was the carpet ; the elder bushes and the wild rose hedges were garlands of flowers ; and for a wash-hand basin he had the whole brook with the clear fresh water, where the sedges bowed before him and wished him ‘good evening’ and ‘good morning’. The moon was certainly a great night-lamp, high up under the blue ceiling, and that lamp would never set fire to the curtains with its light. John could sleep quite quietly, and he did so, and never woke until the sun rose and all the little birds were singing around, ‘Good morning ! good morning ! Are you not up yet ?’

The bells were ringing for church ; it was Sunday. The people went to hear the preacher, and John followed them, and sang a psalm and heard God’s Word. It seemed to him just as if he was in his own church, where he had been christened and had sung psalms with his father.

Out in the churchyard were many graves, and on some of them the grass grew high. Then he thought of his father’s grave, which would at last look like these, as he could not weed it and adorn it. So he sat down and plucked up the long grass, set up the wooden crosses which had fallen down, and put back in their places the wreaths which the wind had blown away from the graves ; for he thought, ‘Perhaps some one will do the same to my father’s grave, as I cannot do it.’

Outside the churchyard gate stood an old beggar, leaning upon his crutch. John gave him the silver shillings

which he had, and then went away, happy and cheerful, into the wide world. Towards evening the weather became terribly bad. He made haste to get under shelter, but dark night soon came on ; then at last he came to a little church, which lay quite solitary on a small hill.

The door luckily stood ajar, and he crept in ; here he decided to remain till the storm had gone down.

‘ Here I will sit down in a corner,’ said he ; ‘ I am quite tired and require a little rest.’ Then he sat down, folded his hands, and said his evening prayer ; and before he was aware of it he was asleep and dreaming, while it thundered and lightened without.

When he woke it was midnight ; but the bad weather had passed by, and the moon shone in upon him through the windows. In the midst of the church stood an open coffin with a dead man in it who had not yet been buried. John was not at all timid, for he had a good conscience ; and he knew very well that the dead do not harm any one. It is living people who do harm. Two such living bad men stood close by the dead man, who had been placed here in the church till he should be buried. They had an evil design against him, and would not let him rest quietly in his coffin, but were going to throw him out before the church door—the poor dead man !

‘ Why will you do that ? ’ asked John ; ‘ that is wrong and wicked. Let him rest, for mercy’s sake.’

‘ Nonsense ! ’ replied the bad men ; ‘ he has cheated us. He owed us money and could not pay it, and now he ’s dead into the bargain, and we shall not get a penny ! So we mean to revenge ourselves properly : he shall lie like a dog outside the church door ! ’

‘ I have not more than fifty dollars,’ cried John, ‘ that is my whole inheritance ; but I will gladly give it you, if you will honestly promise me to leave the poor dead man in peace. I shall manage to get on without the money ; I have hearty strong limbs, and Heaven will always help me.’

‘ Yes,’ said these ugly bad men, ‘ if you will pay his debt we will do nothing to him, you may depend upon that ! ’ And then they took the money he gave them, laughed aloud at his good nature, and went their way. But he laid the corpse out again in the coffin, and folded

its hands, took leave of it, and went away contentedly through the great forest.

All around, wherever the moon could shine through between the trees, he saw the graceful little elves playing merrily. They did not let him disturb them ; they knew that he was a good innocent lad ; and it is only the bad people who never can see the elves. Some of them were not larger than a finger, and had fastened up their long yellow hair with golden combs : they were rocking themselves, two and two, on the great dew-drops that lay on the leaves and on the high grass ; sometimes the drop rolled away, and then they fell down between the long grass-stalks, and that occasioned much laughter and noise among the other little creatures. It was extremely amusing. They sang, and John recognized quite plainly the pretty songs which he had learned as a little boy. Great coloured spiders, with silver crowns on their heads, had to spin long hanging bridges and palaces from hedge to hedge ; and as the tiny dew-drops fell on these they looked like gleaming glass in the moonlight. This continued until the sun rose. Then the little elves crept into the flower-buds, and the wind caught their bridges and palaces, which flew through the air in the shape of spider's webs.

John had just come out of the wood, when a strong man's voice called out behind him, 'Halloo, comrade ! whither are you journeying ?'

'Into the wide world !' he replied. 'I have neither father nor mother, and am but a poor lad ; but Providence will help me.'

'I am going out into the wide world, too,' said the strange man : 'shall we two keep one another company ?'

'Yes, certainly,' said John ; and so they went on together. Soon they became very fond of each other, for they were both good souls. But John saw that the stranger was much more clever than himself. He had travelled through almost the whole world, and could tell of almost everything that existed.

The sun already stood high when they seated themselves under a great tree to eat their breakfast ; and just then an old woman came up. Oh, she was very old, and walked quite bent, leaning upon a crutch ; upon her back she

carried a bundle of firewood which she had collected in the forest. Her apron was tucked up, and John saw that three great stalks of fern and some willow twigs stuck out of it. When she was close to them, her foot slipped; she fell and gave a loud scream, for she had broken her leg, the poor old woman!

John directly proposed that they should carry the old woman home to her dwelling; but the stranger opened

his knapsack, took out a little jar, and said that he had a salve there which would immediately make her leg whole and strong, so that she could walk home herself, as if she had never broken her leg at all. But for that he required that she should give him the three rods which she carried in her apron.

‘That would be paying well!’ said the old woman, and she nodded her head in a strange way. She did not like to give away the rods, but then it was not agreeable

to lie there with a broken leg. So she gave him the wands; and as soon as he had only rubbed the ointment on her leg, the old mother arose, and walked much better than before—such was the power of this ointment. But then it was not to be bought at the chemist’s.

‘What do you want with the rods?’ John asked his travelling companion.

‘They are three capital fern brooms,’ replied he. ‘I like those very much, for I am a whimsical fellow.’

And they went on a good way.

‘See how the sky is becoming overcast,’ said John, pointing straight before them. ‘Those are terribly thick clouds.’



‘No,’ replied his travelling companion, ‘those are not clouds, they are mountains—the great glorious mountains, on which one gets quite up over the clouds, and into the free air. Believe me, it is delicious ! To-morrow we shall certainly be far out into the world.’

But that was not so near as it looked ; they had to walk for a whole day before they came to the mountains, where the black woods grew straight up towards heaven, and there were stones almost as big as a whole town. It might certainly be hard work to get quite across them, and for that reason John and his comrade went into the inn to rest themselves well, and gather strength for the morrow’s journey.

Down in the great common room in the inn many guests were assembled, for a man was there exhibiting a puppet-show. He had just put up his little theatre, and the people were sitting round to see the play. Quite in front a fat old butcher had taken his seat in the very best place ; his great bulldog, who looked very much inclined to bite, sat at his side, and made big eyes, as all the rest were doing.

Now the play began ; and it was a very nice play, with a king and a queen in it ; they sat upon a velvet throne, and had gold crowns on their heads and long trains to their cloaks, for their means admitted of that. The prettiest of wooden dolls with glass eyes and great moustaches stood at all the doors, and opened and shut them so that fresh air might come into the room. It was a very pleasant play, and not at all mournful. But—goodness knows what the big bulldog can have been thinking of !—just as the queen stood up and was walking across the boards, as the fat butcher did not hold him, he made a spring upon the stage, and seized the queen round her slender waist so that it cracked again. It was quite terrible !

The poor man who managed the play was very much frightened and quite sorrowful about his queen, for she was the daintiest little doll he possessed, and now the ugly bulldog had bitten off her head. But afterwards, when the people went away, the stranger said that he would put her to rights again ; and then he brought out his little jar, and rubbed the doll with the ointment with which he had

cured the old woman when she broke her leg. As soon as the doll had been rubbed, she was whole again ; yes, she could even move all her limbs by herself ; it was no longer necessary to pull her by her string. The doll was like a living person, only that she could not speak. The man who had the little puppet-show was very glad, now he had not to hold this doll any more. She could dance by herself, and none of the others could do that.

When night came on, and all the people in the inn had gone to bed, there was some one who sighed so fearfully, and went on doing it so long, that they all got up to see who this could be. The man who had shown the play went to his little theatre, for it was there that somebody was sighing. All the wooden dolls lay mixed together, the king and all his followers ; and it was they who sighed so pitiably, and stared with their big glass eyes ; for they wished to be rubbed a little as the queen had been, so that they might be able to move by themselves. The queen at once sank on her knees, and stretched forth her beautiful crown, as if she begged, ' Take this from me, but rub my husband and my courtiers ! ' Then the poor man, the proprietor of the little theatre and the dolls, could not refrain from weeping, for he was really sorry for them. He immediately promised the travelling companion that he would give him all the money he should receive the next evening for the performance if the latter would only anoint four or five of his dolls. But the comrade said he did not require anything at all but the sword the man wore by his side ; and, on receiving this, he anointed six of the dolls, who immediately began to dance so gracefully that all the girls, the living human girls, fell a dancing too. The coachman and the cook danced, the waiter and the chambermaid, and all the strangers, and the fire-shovel and tongs ; but these latter fell down just as they made their first leaps. Yes, it was a merry night !

Next morning John went away from them all with his travelling companion, up on to the high mountains, and through the great pine woods. They came so high up that the church steeples under them looked at last like little red berries among all the green ; and they could see very far, many, many miles away, where they had never been.

So much splendour in the lovely world John had never seen at one time before. And the sun shone warm in the fresh blue air, and among the mountains he could hear the huntsmen blowing their horns so gaily and sweetly that tears came into his eyes, and he could not help calling out, 'How kind has Heaven been to us all, to give us all the splendour that is in this world !'

The travelling companion also stood there with folded hands, and looked over the forest and the towns in the warm sunshine. At the same time there arose lovely sounds over their heads : they looked up, and a great white swan was soaring in the air, and singing as they had never heard a bird sing till then. But the song became weaker and weaker ; he bowed his head and sank quite slowly down at their feet, where he lay dead, the beautiful bird !

'Two such splendid wings,' said the travelling companion, 'so white and large, as those which this bird has, are worth money ; I will take them with me. Do you see that it was good I got a sabre ?'

And so, with one blow, he cut off both the wings of the dead swan, for he wanted to keep them.

They now travelled for many, many miles over the mountains, till at last they saw a great town before them with hundreds of towers, which glittered like silver in the sun. In the midst of the town was a splendid marble palace, roofed with red gold. And there the king lived.

John and the travelling companion would not go into the town at once, but remained in the inn outside the town, that they might dress themselves ; for they wished to look nice when they came out into the streets. The host told them that the king was a very good man, who never did harm to any one ; but his daughter, yes, goodness preserve us ! she was a bad princess. She possessed beauty enough—no one could be so pretty and so charming as she was—but of what use was that ? She was a wicked witch, through whose fault many gallant princes had lost their lives. She had given permission to all men to seek her hand. Any one might come, be he prince or beggar ; it was all the same to her. He had only to guess three things

about which she questioned him. If he could do that she would marry him, and he was to be king over the whole country when her father should die ; but if he could not guess the three things, she caused him to be hanged or to have his head cut off ! So evil and so wicked was the beautiful princess. Her father, the old king, was very sorry about it ; but he could not forbid her to be so wicked, because he had once said that he would have nothing to do with her lovers ; she might do as she liked. Every time a prince came, and was to guess to gain the princess, he was unable to do it, and was hanged or lost his head. He had been warned in time, you see, and might have given over his wooing. The old king was so sorry for all this misery and woe, that he used to go down on his knees with all his soldiers for a whole day in every year, praying that the princess might become good ; but she would not, by any means. The old women who drank brandy used to colour it quite black before they drank it, they were in such deep mourning—and they certainly could not do more.

‘The ugly princess !’ said John ; ‘she ought really to have the rod ; that would do her good. If I were only the old king she should be punished !’

Then they heard the people outside shouting ‘Hurrah !’ The princess came by ; and she was really so beautiful that all the people forgot how wicked she was, and that is why they cried ‘Hurrah !’ Twelve beautiful virgins, all in white silk gowns, and each with a golden tulip in her hand, rode on coal-black steeds at her side. The princess herself had a snow-white horse, decked with diamonds and rubies. Her riding-habit was all of cloth of gold, and the whip she held in her hand looked like a sunbeam ; the golden crown on her head was just like little stars out of the sky, and her mantle was sewn together out of more than a thousand beautiful butterflies’ wings. In spite of this, she herself was much more lovely than all her clothes.

When John saw her, his face became as red as a drop of blood, and he could hardly utter a word. The princess looked just like the beautiful lady with the golden crown, of whom he had dreamt on the night when his father died. He thought her so enchanting that he could not help loving

her greatly. It could not be true that she was a wicked witch, who caused people to be hanged or beheaded if they could not guess the riddles she put to them.

‘Every one has permission to aspire to her hand, even the poorest beggar. I will really go to the castle, for I cannot help doing it!’

They all told him not to attempt it, for certainly he would fare as all the rest had done. His travelling companion too tried to dissuade him; but John thought it would end well. He brushed his shoes and his coat, washed his face and his hands, combed his beautiful yellow hair, and then went quite alone into the town and to the palace.

‘Come in!’ said the old king, when John knocked at the door.

John opened it, and the old king came towards him in a dressing-gown and embroidered slippers; he had the crown on his head, and the sceptre in one hand and the orb in the other. ‘Wait a little!’ said he, and put the orb under his arm, so that he could reach out his hand to John. But as soon as he learned that his visitor was a suitor, he began to weep so violently that both the sceptre and the orb fell to the ground, and he was obliged to wipe his eyes with his dressing-gown. Poor old king!

‘Give it up!’ said he. ‘You will fare badly, as all the others have done. Well, you shall see!’

Then he led him out into the princess’s pleasure-garden. There was a terrible sight! In every tree there hung three or four kings’ sons who had wooed the princess, but had not been able to guess the riddles she proposed to them. Each time that the breeze blew all the skeletons rattled, so that the little birds were frightened, and never dared to come into the garden. All the flowers were tied up to human bones, and in the flower-pots skulls stood and grinned. That was certainly a garden for a princess.

‘Here you see it,’ said the old king. ‘It will chance to you as it has chanced to all these whom you see here; therefore you had better give it up. You will really make me unhappy, for I take these things very much to heart.’

John kissed the good old king’s hand, and said it would go well, for that he was quite enchanted with the beautiful princess.

Then the princess herself came riding into the courtyard, with all her ladies ; and they went out to her and wished



her good morning. She was beautiful to look at, and she gave John her hand. And he cared much more for her then than before—she could certainly not be a wicked witch,

as the people asserted. Then they betook themselves to the hall, and the little pages waited upon them with preserves and gingerbread nuts. But the old king was quite sorrowful; he could not eat anything at all. Besides, gingerbread nuts were too hard for him.

It was settled that John should come to the palace again the next morning; then the judges and the whole council would be assembled, and would hear how he succeeded with his answers. If it went well, he should come twice more; but no one had yet come who had succeeded in guessing right the first time, and so they had to lose their lives.

John was not at all anxious as to how he should fare. On the contrary, he was merry, thought only of the beautiful princess, and felt quite certain that he should be helped; but *how* he did not know, and preferred not to think of it. He danced along on the road returning to the inn, where his travelling companion was waiting for him.

John could not leave off telling how polite the princess had been to him, and how beautiful she was. He declared he already longed for the next day, when he was to go into the palace and try his luck in guessing.

But the travelling companion shook his head and was quite downcast. 'I am so fond of you!' said he. 'We might have been together a long time yet, and now I am to lose you already! You poor dear John! I should like to cry, but I will not disturb your merriment on the last evening, perhaps, we shall ever spend together. We will be merry, very merry! To-morrow, when you are gone, I can weep undisturbed.'

All the people in the town had heard directly that a new suitor for the princess had arrived; and there was great sorrow on that account. The theatre remained closed; the women who sold cakes tied bits of crape round their sugar pigs, and the king and the priests were on their knees in the churches. There was great lamentation; for John would not, they all thought, fare better than the other suitors had fared.

Towards evening the travelling companion mixed a great bowl of punch, and said to John, 'Now we will be very merry, and drink to the health of the princess.' But when

John had drunk two glasses, he became so sleepy that he found it impossible to keep his eyes open, and he sank into a deep sleep. The travelling companion lifted him very gently from his chair, and laid him in the bed ; and when it grew to be dark night, he took the two great wings which he had cut off the swan, and bound them to his own shoulders. Then he put in his pocket the longest of the rods he had received from the old woman who had fallen and broken her leg ; and he opened the window and flew away over the town, straight towards the palace, where he seated himself in a corner under the window which looked into the bedroom of the princess.

All was quiet in the whole town. Now the clock struck a quarter to twelve, the window was opened, and the princess came out in a long white cloak, and with black wings, and flew away across the town to a great mountain. But the travelling companion made himself invisible, so that she could not see him at all, and flew behind her, and whipped the princess with his rod, so that the blood actually came wherever he struck. Oh, that was a voyage through the air ! The wind caught her cloak, so that it spread out on all sides like a great sail, and the moon shone through it.

‘How it hails ! how it hails !’ said the princess at every blow she got from the rod ; and it served her right. At last she arrived at the mountain, and knocked there. There was a rolling like thunder, as the mountain opened, and the princess went in. The travelling companion followed her, for no one could see him—he was invisible. They went through a great long passage, where the walls shone in quite a peculiar way : there were more than a thousand glowing spiders running up and down the walls and gleaming like fire. Then they came into a great hall built of silver and gold ; flowers as big as sunflowers, red and blue, shone on the walls ; but no one could pluck these flowers, for the stems were ugly poisonous snakes, and the flowers were streams of fire pouring out of their mouths. The whole ceiling was covered with shining glowworms and sky-blue bats, flapping their thin wings. It looked quite terrific ! In the middle of the floor was a throne, carried by four skeleton horses, with harness of fiery red

spiders ; the throne itself was of milk-white glass, and the cushions were little black mice, biting each other's tails. Above it was a canopy of pink spider's web, trimmed with the prettiest little green flies, which gleamed like jewels. On the throne sat an old magician, with a crown on his ugly head and a sceptre in his hand. He kissed the princess on the forehead, made her sit down beside him on the costly throne, and then the music began. Great black grasshoppers played on jews'-harps, and the owl beat her wings upon her body, because she hadn't a drum. That was a strange concert ! Little black goblins with a Jack-o'-lantern light on their caps danced about in the hall. But no one could see the travelling companion : he had placed himself just behind the throne, and heard and saw everything. The courtiers, who now came in, were very grand and stately ; but he who could see it all knew very well what it all meant. They were nothing more than broomsticks with heads of cabbages on them, which the magician had animated by his power, and to whom he had given embroidered clothes. But that did not matter, for, you see, they were only wanted for show.

After there had been a little dancing, the princess told the magician that she had a new suitor, and therefore she inquired of him what she should think of to ask the suitor when he should come to-morrow to the palace.

'Listen !' said the magician, 'I will tell you that : you must choose something very easy, for then he won't think of it. Think of one of your shoes. That he will not guess. Let him have his head cut off : but don't forget, when you come to me to-morrow night, to bring me his eyes, for I'll eat them.'

The princess curtsied very low, and said she would not forget the eyes. The magician opened the mountain, and she flew home again ; but the travelling companion followed her, and beat her again so hard with the rod that she sighed quite deeply about the heavy hail-storm, and hurried as much as she could to get back into the bedroom through the open window. The travelling companion, for his part, flew back to the inn, where John was still asleep, took off his wings, and then lay down upon the bed, for he might well be tired.

It was quite early in the morning when John awoke. The travelling companion also got up, and said he had had a wonderful dream in the night, about the princess and her shoe ; and he therefore begged John to ask if the princess had not thought about her shoe. For it was this he had heard from the magician in the mountain.

But he would not tell John anything about that ; he merely told him to ask if she had not thought about one of her shoes.

‘ I may just as well ask about that as about anything else,’ said John. ‘ Perhaps it is quite right, what you have dreamed. But I will bid you farewell ; for, if I guess wrong, I shall never see you more.’

Then they embraced each other, and John went into the town and to the palace. The entire hall was filled with people : the judges sat in their arm-chairs and had eider-down pillows behind their heads, for they had a great deal to think about. The old king stood up, and wiped his eyes with a white pocket-handkerchief. Now the princess came in. She was much more beautiful than yesterday, and bowed to all in a very affable manner ; but to John she gave her hand, and said, ‘ Good morning to you.’

Now John was to guess what she had thought of. Oh, how lovingly she looked at him ! But as soon as she heard the single word ‘ shoe ’ pronounced, she became as white as chalk in the face, and trembled all over. But that availed her nothing, for John had guessed right !

Wonderful ! How glad the old king was ! He threw a somersault beautiful to behold. And all the people clapped their hands in honour of him and of John, who had guessed right the first time !

The travelling companion beamed with delight, when he heard how well matters had gone. But John folded his hands and thanked God, who certainly would help him also the second and third time. The next day he was to guess again.

The evening passed just like that of yesterday. While John slept the travelling companion flew behind the princess out to the mountain, and beat her even harder than the time before, for now he had taken two rods. No one saw him, and he heard everything. The princess was

to think of her glove ; and this again he told to John as if it had been a dream. Thus John could guess correctly, which caused great rejoicing in the palace. The whole court threw somersaults, just as they had seen the king do the first time ; but the princess lay on the sofa, and would not say a single word. Now, the question was, if John could guess properly the third time. If he succeeded, he was to have the beautiful princess and inherit the whole kingdom after the old king's death. If he failed, he was to lose his life, and the magician would eat his beautiful blue eyes.

That evening John went early to bed, said his prayers, and went to sleep quite quietly. But the travelling companion bound his wings to his back and his sword by his side, and took all three rods with him, and so flew away to the palace.

It was a very dark night. The wind blew so hard that the tiles flew off from the roofs, and the trees in the garden where the skeletons hung bent like reeds before the storm. The lightning flashed out every minute, and the thunder rolled just as if it were one peal lasting the whole night. Now the window opened, and the princess flew out. She was as pale as death ; but she laughed at the bad weather, and thought it was not bad enough yet. And her white cloak fluttered in the wind like a great sail ; but the travelling companion beat her with the three rods, so that the blood dripped upon the ground, and at last she could scarcely fly any farther. At length, however, she arrived at the mountain.

‘It hails and blows dreadfully!’ she said. ‘I have never been out in such weather.’

‘One may have too much of a good thing,’ said the magician. Now she told him that John had also guessed correctly the second time ; if he did the same on the morrow, then he had won, and she could never more come out to him in the mountain, and would never be able to perform such feats of magic as before, and so she was quite dejected. ‘He shall not be able to guess,’ said the magician. ‘I shall think of something of which he has never thought, or he must be a greater conjuror than I. But now we will be merry.’ And he took the princess by

the hands, and they danced about with all the little goblins and Jack-o'-lanterns that were in the room. The red spiders jumped just as merrily up and down the walls : it looked as if fiery flowers were spurting out. The owl played the drum, the crickets piped, and the black grasshoppers played on the jews'-harp. It was a merry ball.

When they had danced long enough the princess was obliged to go home, for she might be missed in the palace. The magician said he would accompany her, then they would have each other's company on the way.

Then they flew away into the bad weather, and the travelling companion broke his three rods across their backs. Never had the magician been out in such a hail-storm. In front of the palace he said good-bye to the princess, and whispered to her at the same time, 'Think of my head.' But the travelling companion heard it ; and just at the moment when the princess slipped through the window into her bedroom, and the magician was about to turn back, he seized him by his long beard, and with his sabre cut off the ugly conjuror's head just by the shoulders, so that the magician did not even see him. The body he threw out into the sea to the fishes ; but the head he only dipped into the water, and then tied it in his silk handkerchief, took it with him into the inn, and then lay down to sleep.

Next morning he gave John the handkerchief, and told him not to untie it until the princess asked him to tell her thoughts.

There were so many people in the great hall of the palace, that they stood as close together as radishes bound together in a bundle. The council sat in the chairs with the soft pillows, and the old king had new clothes on ; the golden crown and sceptre had been polished, and everything looked quite stately. But the princess was very pale, and had a coal-black dress on, as if she were going to a funeral.

'Of what have I thought ?' she asked John. And he immediately untied the handkerchief, and was himself quite frightened when he saw the ugly magician's head. All present shuddered, for it was terrible to look upon ; but the princess sat just like a statue, and could not utter



a single word. At length she stood up, and gave John her hand, for he had guessed correctly. She did not look at any one, only sighed aloud, and said, 'Now you are my lord!—this evening we will hold our wedding.'

'I like that!' cried the old king. 'So I would have it.'

All present cried, 'Hurrah!' The soldiers' band played music in the streets, the bells rang, and the cake-women took off the black crape from their sugar pigs, for joy now reigned everywhere; three oxen roasted whole, and stuffed with ducks and fowls, were placed in the middle of the market, that every one might cut himself a slice; the fountains ran with the best wine; and whoever bought a penny cake at a baker's got six buns into the bargain, and the buns had raisins in them.

In the evening the whole town was illuminated; the soldiers fired off the cannon, and the boys let off crackers; and there was eating and drinking, clinking of glasses, and dancing, in the palace. All the noble gentlemen and pretty ladies danced with each other, and one could hear, a long distance off, how they sang—

Here are many pretty girls, who all love to dance;

See, they whirl like spinning-wheels, retire and advance.

Turn, my pretty maiden, do, till the sole falls from your shoe.

But still the princess was a witch, and did not like John. This had been expected by the travelling companion; and so he gave John three feathers out of the swan's wings, and a little bottle with a few drops in it, and told John that he must put a large tub of water before the princess's bed; and when the princess was about to get into bed, he should give her a little push, so that she should fall into the tub; and then he must dip her three times, after he had put in the feathers and poured in the drops; she would then lose her magic qualities, and love him very much.

John did all that the travelling companion had advised him to do. The princess screamed out loudly while he dipped her in the tub, and struggled under his hands in the form of a great coal-black swan with fiery eyes. When she came up the second time above the water, the swan was white, with the exception of a black ring round her neck. John let the water close for the third time over the bird, and in the same moment it was again changed to the

beautiful princess. She was more beautiful even than before, and thanked him, with tears in her lovely eyes, that he had freed her from the magic spell.

The next morning the old king came with his whole court, and then there was great congratulation till late into the day. Last of all came the travelling companion ; he had his staff in his hand and his knapsack on his back. John kissed him many times, and said he must not depart,— he must remain with the friend of whose happiness he was the cause. But the travelling companion shook his head, and said mildly and kindly,

‘No, now my time is up. I have only paid my debt. Do you remember the dead man whom the bad people wished to injure ? You gave all you possessed in order that he might have rest in the grave. I am that man.’

And in the same moment he vanished.

The wedding festivities lasted a whole month. John and the princess loved each other truly, and the old king passed many pleasant days, and let their little children ride on his knees and play with his sceptre. And John afterwards became king over the whole country.



THE LITTLE SEA MAID

FAR out in the sea the water is as blue as the petals of the most beautiful corn-flower, and as clear as the purest glass. But it is very deep, deeper than any cable will sound ; many steeples must be placed one above the other to reach from the bottom to the surface of the water. And down there live the sea people.

Now, you must not believe there is nothing down there but the bare sand ; no,—the strangest trees and plants grow there, so pliable in their stalks and leaves that at the least motion of the water they move just as if they had life. All fishes, great and small, glide among the twigs, just as here the birds do in the trees. In the deepest spot of all lies the Sea King's castle : the walls are of coral, and the tall pointed windows of the clearest amber ; mussel shells form the roof, and they open and shut according as the water flows. It looks lovely, for in each shell lie gleaming pearls, a single one of which would be a great ornament in a queen's diadem.

The Sea King below there had been a widower for many years, while his old mother kept house for him. She was a clever woman, but proud of her rank, so she wore twelve oysters on her tail, while the other great people were only allowed to wear six. Beyond this she was deserving of great praise, especially because she was very fond of her granddaughters, the little sea princesses. These were six pretty children ; but the youngest was the most beautiful of all. Her skin was as clear and as fine as a rose leaf, her eyes were as blue as the deepest sea, but, like all the rest, she had no feet, for her body ended in a fish-tail.

All day long they could play in the castle, down in the halls, where living flowers grew out of the walls. The great amber windows were opened, and then the fishes swam in to them, just as the swallows fly in to us when we open our windows ; but the fishes swam straight up to the princesses, ate out of their hands, and let themselves be stroked.

Outside the castle was a great garden with bright red

and dark blue flowers : the fruit glowed like gold, and the flowers like flames of fire ; and they continually kept moving their stalks and leaves. The earth itself was the finest sand, but blue as the flame of brimstone. A peculiar blue radiance lay upon everything down there : one would have thought oneself high in the air, with the canopy of heaven above and around, rather than at the bottom of the deep sea. During a calm the sun could be seen ; it appeared like a purple flower, from which all light streamed out.

Each of the little princesses had her own little place in the garden, where she might dig and plant at her good pleasure. One gave her flower-bed the form of a whale ; another thought it better to make hers like a little mermaid ; but the youngest made hers quite round, like the sun, and had only flowers which gleamed red as the sun itself. She was a strange child, quiet and thoughtful ; and when the other sisters made a display of the beautiful things they had received out of wrecked ships, she would have nothing beyond the red flowers which resembled the sun, except a pretty marble statue. This was a figure of a charming boy, hewn out of white clear stone, which had sunk down to the bottom of the sea from a wreck. She planted a pink weeping willow beside this statue ; the tree grew famously, and hung its fresh branches over the statue towards the blue sandy ground, where the shadow showed violet, and moved like the branches themselves ; it seemed as if the ends of the branches and the roots were playing together and wished to kiss each other.

There was no greater pleasure for her than to hear of the world of men above them. The old grandmother had to tell all she knew of ships and towns, of men and animals. It seemed particularly beautiful to her that up on the earth the flowers shed fragrance, for they had none down at the bottom of the sea, and that the trees were green, and that the fishes which one saw there among the trees could sing so loud and clear that it was a pleasure to hear them. What the grandmother called fishes were the little birds ; otherwise they could not have understood her, for they had never seen a bird.

‘ When you have completed your fifteenth year,’ said

the grandmother, 'you shall have leave to rise up out of the sea, to sit on the rocks in the moonlight, and to see the great ships sailing by. Then you will see forests and towns!'

In the next year one of the sisters was fifteen years of age, but each of the others was one year younger than the next; so that the youngest had full five years to wait before she could come up from the bottom of the sea, and find out how our world looked. But one promised to tell the others what she had seen and what she had thought the most beautiful on the first day of her visit; for their grandmother could not tell them enough—there was so much about which they wanted information.

No one was more anxious about these things than the youngest—just that one who had the longest time to wait, and who was always quiet and thoughtful. Many a night she stood by the open window, and looked up through the dark blue water at the fishes splashing with their fins and tails. Moon and stars she could see; they certainly shone quite faintly, but through the water they looked much larger than they appear in our eyes. When something like a black cloud passed among them, she knew that it was either a whale swimming over her head, or a ship with many people: they certainly did not think that a pretty little sea maid was standing down below stretching up her white hands towards the keel of their ship.

Now the eldest princess was fifteen years old, and might mount up to the surface of the sea.

When she came back, she had a hundred things to tell—but the finest thing, she said, was to lie in the moonshine on a sand-bank in the quiet sea, and to look at the neighbouring coast, with the large town, where the lights twinkled like a hundred stars, and to hear the music and the noise and clamour of carriages and men, to see the many church steeples, and to hear the sound of the bells. Just because she could not get up to these, she longed for them more than for anything.

Oh, how the youngest sister listened! and afterwards when she stood at the open window and looked up through the dark blue water, she thought of the great city with all its bustle and noise; and then she thought she could hear

the church bells ringing, even down to the depth where she was.

In the following year, the second sister received permission to mount upward through the water and to swim whither she pleased. She rose up just as the sun was setting ; and this spectacle, she said, was the most beautiful. The whole sky looked like gold, she said, and as to the clouds, she could not properly describe their beauty. They sailed away over her head, purple and violet-coloured, but far quicker than the clouds there flew a flight of wild swans, like a long white veil, over the water towards where the sun stood. She swam towards them ; but the sun sank, and the roseate hue faded on the sea and in the clouds.

In the following year the next sister went up. She was the boldest of them all, and therefore she swam up a broad stream that poured its waters into the sea. She saw glorious green hills clothed with vines ; palaces and castles peeped forth from amid splendid woods ; she heard how all the birds sang ; and the sun shone so warm that she was often obliged to dive under the water to cool her glowing face. In a little bay she found a whole swarm of little mortals. They were quite naked, and splashed about in the water : she wanted to play with them, but they fled in affright, and a little black animal came—it was a dog, but she had never seen a dog—and it barked at her so terribly that she became frightened, and made out to the open sea. But she could never forget the glorious woods, the green hills, and the pretty children, who could swim in the water though they had not fish-tails.

The fourth sister was not so bold : she remained out in the midst of the wild sea, and declared that just there it was most beautiful. One could see for many miles around, and the sky above looked like a bell of glass. She had seen ships, but only in the far distance—they looked like sea-gulls ; and the funny dolphins had thrown somersaults, and the great whales spouted out water from their nostrils, so that it looked like hundreds of fountains all around.

Now came the turn of the fifth sister. Her birthday came in the winter, and so she saw what the others had not seen the first time. The sea looked quite green, and

great icebergs were floating about ; each one appeared like a pearl, she said, and yet was much taller than the church steeples built by men. They showed themselves in the strangest forms, and shone like diamonds. She had seated herself upon one of the greatest of all, and let the wind play with her long hair ; and all the sailing ships tacked about in great alarm to get beyond where she sat ; but towards evening the sky became covered with clouds, it thundered and lightened, and the black waves lifted the great iceblocks high up, and let them glow in the red glare. On all the ships the sails were reefed, and there was fear and anguish. But she sat quietly upon her floating iceberg, and saw the forked blue flashes dart into the sea.

Each of the sisters, as she came up for the first time to the surface of the water, was delighted with the new and beautiful sights she saw ; but as they now had permission, as grown-up girls, to go whenever they liked, it became indifferent to them. They wished themselves back again, and after a month had elapsed they said it was best of all down below, for there one felt so comfortably at home.

Many an evening hour the five sisters took one another by the arm and rose up in a row over the water. They had splendid voices, more charming than any mortal could have ; and when a storm was approaching, so that they might expect that ships would go down, they swam on before the ships and sang lovely songs, which told how beautiful it was at the bottom of the sea, and exhorted the sailors not to be afraid to come down. But these could not understand the words, and thought it was the storm sighing ; and they did not see the splendours below, for if the ships sank they were drowned, and came as corpses to the Sea King's palace.

When the sisters thus rose up, arm in arm, in the evening time, through the water, the little sister stood all alone looking after them ; and she felt as if she must weep ; but the sea maid has no tears, and for this reason she suffers far more acutely.

‘ Oh, if I were only fifteen years old ! ’ said she. ‘ I know I shall love the world up there very much, and the people who live and dwell there.’

At last she was really fifteen years old.

‘Now, you see, you are grown up,’ said the grandmother, the old dowager. ‘Come, let me adorn you like your sisters.’

And she put a wreath of white lilies in the little maid’s hair, but each petal in the flower was half a pearl; and the old lady let eight great oysters attach themselves to the princess’s tail, in token of her high rank.

‘But that hurts so!’ said the little sea maid.

‘Yes, one must suffer something for the sake of rank,’ replied the old lady.

Oh, how glad she would have been to shake off all the tokens of rank and lay aside the heavy wreath! Her red flowers in the garden suited her better; but she could not help it. ‘Farewell!’ she said, and then she rose, light and clear as a water-bubble, up through the sea.

The sun had just set when she lifted her head above the sea, but all the clouds still shone like roses and gold, and in the pale red sky the evening star gleamed bright and beautiful. The air was mild and fresh and the sea quite calm. There lay a great ship with three masts; one single sail only was set, for not a breeze stirred, and around in the shrouds and on the yards sat the sailors. There was music and singing, and as the evening closed in, hundreds of coloured lanterns were lighted up, and looked as if the flags of every nation were waving in the air. The little sea maid swam straight to the cabin window, and each time the sea lifted her up she could look through the panes, which were clear as crystal, and see many people standing within dressed in their best. But the handsomest of all was the young prince with the great black eyes: he was certainly not much more than sixteen years old; it was his birthday, and that was the cause of all this festivity. The sailors were dancing upon deck; and when the young prince came out, more than a hundred rockets rose into the air; they shone like day, so that the little sea maid was quite startled, and dived under the water; but soon she put out her head again, and then it seemed just as if all the stars of heaven were falling down upon her. She had never seen such fireworks. Great suns whirled around, glorious fiery fishes flew up into the blue air, and everything was mirrored in the clear blue sea. The ship itself

was so brightly lit up that every separate rope could be seen, and the people therefore appeared the more plainly. Oh, how handsome the young prince was ! And he pressed the people's hands and smiled, while the music rang out in the glorious night.

It became late ; but the little sea maid could not turn her eyes from the ship and from the beautiful prince. The coloured lanterns were extinguished, rockets ceased to fly into the air, and no more cannons were fired ; but there was a murmuring and a buzzing deep down in the sea ; and she sat on the water, swaying up and down, so that she could look into the cabin. But as the ship got more way, one sail after another was spread. And now the waves rose higher, great clouds came up, and in the distance there was lightning. Oh ! it was going to be fearful weather, therefore the sailors furled the sails. The great ship flew in swift career over the wild sea : the waters rose up like great black mountains, which wanted to roll over the masts ; but like a swan the ship dived into the valleys between these high waves, and then let itself be lifted on high again. To the little sea maid this seemed merry sport, but to the sailors it appeared very differently. The ship groaned and creaked ; the thick planks were bent by the heavy blows ; the sea broke into the ship ; the mainmast snapped in two like a thin reed ; and the ship lay over on her side, while the water rushed into the hold. Now the little sea maid saw that the people were in peril ; she herself was obliged to take care to avoid the beams and fragments of the ship which were floating about on the waters. One moment it was so pitch dark that not a single object could be descried, but when it lightened it became so bright that she could distinguish every one on board. Every one was doing the best he could for himself. She looked particularly for the young prince, and when the ship parted she saw him sink into the sea. At first she was very glad, for now he would come down to her. But then she remembered that people could not live in the water, and that when he got down to her father's palace he would certainly be dead. No, he must not die : so she swam about among the beams and planks that strewed the surface, quite forgetting that one of them might have



crushed her. Diving down deep under the water, she again rose high up among the waves, and in this way she at last came to the prince, who could scarcely swim longer in that stormy sea. His arms and legs began to fail him, his beautiful eyes closed, and he would have died had the little sea maid not come. She held his head up over the water, and then allowed the waves to carry her and him whither they listed.

When the morning came the storm had passed by. Of the ship not a fragment was to be seen. The sun came up red and shining out of the water ; it was as if its beams brought back the hue of life to the cheeks of the prince, but his eyes remained closed. The sea maid kissed his high fair forehead and put back his wet hair, and he seemed to her to be like the marble statue in her little garden : she kissed him again and hoped that he might live.

Now she saw in front of her the dry land—high blue mountains, on whose summits the white snow gleamed as if swans were lying there. Down on the coast were glorious green forests, and a building—she could not tell whether it was a church or a convent—stood there. In its garden grew orange and citron trees, and high palms waved in front of the gate. The sea formed a little bay there ; it was quite calm, but very deep. Straight towards the rock where the fine white sand had been cast up, she swam with the handsome prince, and laid him upon the sand, taking especial care that his head was raised in the warm sunshine.

Now all the bells rang in the great white building, and many young girls came walking through the garden. Then the little sea maid swam farther out between some high stones that stood up out of the water, laid some sea foam upon her hair and neck, so that no one could see her little face, and then she watched to see who would come to the poor prince.

In a short time a young girl went that way. She seemed to be much startled, but only for a moment ; then she brought more people, and the sea maid perceived that the prince came back to life and that he smiled at all around him. But he did not cast a smile at her : he did not know

that she had saved him. And she felt very sorrowful ; and when he was taken away into the great building, she dived mournfully under the water and returned to her father's palace.



She had always been gentle and melancholy, but now she became much more so. Her sisters asked her what she had seen the first time she rose up to the surface, but she would tell them nothing.

Many an evening and many a morning she went up to the place where she had left the prince. She saw how the fruits of the garden grew ripe and were gathered ; she saw how the snow melted on the high mountain ; but she did not see the prince, and so she always returned home more sorrowful still. Then her only comfort was to sit in her little garden, and to wind her arms round the beautiful marble statue that resembled the prince ; but she did not tend her flowers ; they grew as if in a wilderness over the paths, and trailed their long leaves and stalks up into the branches of trees, so that it became quite dark there.

At last she could endure it no longer, and told all to one of her sisters, and then the others heard of it too ; but nobody knew of it beyond these and a few other sea maids, who told the secret to their intimate friends. One of these knew who the prince was ; she too had seen the festival on board the ship ; and she announced whence he came and where his kingdom lay.

‘Come, little sister !’ said the other princesses ; and, linking their arms together, they rose up in a long row out of the sea, at the place where they knew the prince’s palace stood.

This palace was built of a kind of bright yellow stone, with great marble staircases, one of which led directly down into the sea. Over the roof rose splendid gilt cupolas, and between the pillars which surrounded the whole dwelling stood marble statues which looked as if they were alive. Through the clear glass in the high windows one looked into the glorious halls, where costly silk hangings and tapestries were hung up, and all the walls were decked with splendid pictures, so that it was a perfect delight to see them. In the midst of the greatest of these halls a great fountain plashed ; its jets shot high up towards the glass dome in the ceiling, through which the sun shone down upon the water and upon the lovely plants growing in the great basin.

Now she knew where he lived, and many an evening and many a night she spent there on the water. She swam far closer to the land than any of the others would have dared to venture ; indeed, she went quite up the narrow channel under the splendid marble balcony, which threw a broad shadow upon the water. Here she sat and watched

the young prince, who thought himself quite alone in the bright moonlight.

Many an evening she saw him sailing, amid the sounds of music, in his costly boat with the waving flags ; she peeped up through the green reeds, and when the wind caught her silver-white veil, and any one saw it, they thought it was a white swan spreading out its wings.

Many a night when the fishermen were on the sea with their torches, she heard much good told of the young prince ; and she rejoiced that she had saved his life when he was driven about, half dead, on the wild billows : she thought how quietly his head had reclined on her bosom, and how heartily she had kissed him ; but he knew nothing of it, and could not even dream of her.

More and more she began to love mankind, and more and more she wished to be able to wander about among those whose world seemed far larger than her own. For they could fly over the sea in ships, and mount up the high hills far above the clouds, and the lands they possessed stretched out in woods and fields farther than her eyes could reach. There was much she wished to know, but her sisters could not answer all her questions ; therefore she applied to the old grandmother ; and the old lady knew the upper world, which she rightly called ‘ the countries above the sea ’, very well.

‘ If people are not drowned,’ asked the little sea maid, ‘ can they live for ever ? Do they not die as we die down here in the sea ? ’

‘ Yes,’ replied the old lady. ‘ They too must die, and their life is even shorter than ours. We can live to be three hundred years old, but when we cease to exist here, we are turned into foam on the surface of the water, and have not even a grave down here among those we love. We have not an immortal soul ; we never receive another life ; we are like the green seaweed, which when once cut through can never bloom again. Men, on the contrary, have a soul which lives for ever, which lives on after the body has become dust ; it mounts up through the clear air, up to all the shining stars ! As we rise up out of the waters and behold all the lands of the earth, so they rise up to unknown glorious places which we can never see.’

‘Why did we not receive an immortal soul?’ asked the little sea maid, sorrowfully. ‘I would gladly give all the hundreds of years I have to live to be a human being only for one day, and to have a hope of partaking the heavenly kingdom.’

‘You must not think of that,’ replied the old lady. ‘We feel ourselves far more happy and far better than mankind yonder.’

‘Then I am to die and to float as foam upon the sea, not hearing the music of the waves, nor seeing the pretty flowers and the red sun? Can I not do anything to win an immortal soul?’

‘No!’ answered the grandmother. ‘Only if a man were to love you so that you should be more to him than father or mother; if he should cling to you with his every thought and with all his love, and let the priest lay his right hand in yours with a promise of faithfulness here and in all eternity, then his soul would be imparted to your body, and you would receive a share of the happiness of mankind. He would give a soul to you and yet retain his own. But that can never come to pass. What is considered beautiful here in the sea—the fish-tail—they would consider ugly on the earth: they don’t understand it; there one must have two clumsy supports which they call legs, to be called beautiful.’

Then the little sea maid sighed, and looked mournfully upon her fish-tail.

‘Let us be glad!’ said the old lady. ‘Let us dance and leap in the three hundred years we have to live. That is certainly long enough; after that we can rest ourselves all the better. This evening we shall have a court ball.’

It was a splendid sight, such as is never seen on earth. The walls and the ceiling of the great dancing-saloon were of thick but transparent glass. Several hundreds of huge shells, pink and grass-green, stood on each side in rows, filled with a blue fire which lit up the whole hall and shone through the walls, so that the sea without was quite lit up; one could see all the innumerable fishes, great and small, swimming towards the glass walls; of some the scales gleamed with purple, while in others they shone like silver and gold. Through the midst of the hall flowed

a broad stream, and on this the sea men and sea women danced to their own charming songs. Such beautiful voices the people of the earth have not. The little sea maid sang the most sweetly of all, and the whole court applauded her, and for a moment she felt gay in her heart, for she knew she had the loveliest voice of all in the sea or on the earth. But soon she thought again of the world above her; she could not forget the charming prince, or her sorrow at not having an immortal soul like his. Therefore she crept out of her father's palace, and while everything within was joy and gladness, she sat melancholy in her little garden. Then she heard the bugle horn sounding through the waters, and thought, 'Now he is certainly sailing above, he whom I love more than father or mother, he on whom my wishes hang, and in whose hand I should like to lay my life's happiness. I will dare everything to win him and an immortal soul. While my sisters dance yonder in my father's palace, I will go to the sea witch of whom I have always been so much afraid: perhaps she can counsel and help me.'

Now the little sea maid went out of her garden to the foaming whirlpools behind which the sorceress dwelt. She had never travelled that way before. No flowers grew there, no sea grass; only the bare grey sand stretched out towards the whirlpools, where the water rushed round like roaring mill-wheels and tore down everything it seized into the deep. Through the midst of these rushing whirlpools she was obliged to pass to get into the domain of the witch; and for a long way there was no other road except one which led over warm bubbling mud; this the witch called her peat-moss. Behind it lay her house in the midst of a singular forest, in which all the trees and bushes were polypes—half animals, half plants. They looked like hundred-headed snakes growing up out of the earth. All the branches were long slimy arms, with fingers like supple snakes, and they moved joint by joint from the root to the farthest point: all that they could seize on in the water they held fast and never again let it go. The little sea maid stopped in front of them quite frightened: her heart beat with fear, and she was nearly turning back; but then she thought of the prince and the human soul,

and her courage came back again. She bound her long flying hair closely around her head, so that the polypes might not seize it. She put her hands together on her breast, and then shot forward as a fish shoots through the water, among the ugly polypes, which stretched out their supple arms and fingers after her. She saw that each of them held something it had seized with hundreds of little arms, like strong iron bands. People who had perished at sea and had sunk deep down, looked forth as white skeletons from among the polypes' arms; ships' rudders and chests they also held fast, and skeletons of land animals, and a little mermaid whom they had caught and strangled; and this seemed the most terrible of all to our little princess.

Now she came to a great marshy place in the wood, where fat water-snakes rolled about, showing their ugly cream-coloured bodies. In the midst of this marsh was a house built of white bones of shipwrecked men; there sat the sea witch feeding a toad out of her mouth, just as a person might feed a little canary bird with sugar. She called the ugly fat water-snakes her little chickens, and allowed them to crawl upwards and all about her.

'I know what you want,' said the sea witch. 'It is stupid of you, but you shall have your way, for it will bring you to grief, my pretty princess. You want to get rid of your fish-tail, and to have two supports instead of it, like those the people of the earth walk with, so that the young prince may fall in love with you, and you may get him and an immortal soul.' And with this the witch laughed loudly and disagreeably, so that the toad and the water-snakes tumbled down to the ground, where they crawled about. 'You come just in time,' said the witch: 'after to-morrow at sunrise I could not help you until another year had gone by. I will prepare a draught for you, with which you must swim to land to-morrow before the sun rises, and seat yourself there and drink it: then your tail will part in two and shrink in and become what the people of the earth call beautiful legs, but it will hurt you—it will seem as if you were cut with a sharp sword. All who see you will declare you to be the prettiest human being they ever beheld. You will keep your graceful walk;

no dancer will be able to move so lightly as you ; but every step you take will be as if you trod upon sharp knives, and as if your blood must flow. If you will bear all this, I can help you.'

'Yes !' said the little sea maid, with a trembling voice ; and she thought of the prince and the immortal soul.

'But, remember,' said the witch, 'when you have once received a human form, you can never be a sea maid again ; you can never return through the water to your sisters or to your father's palace ; and if you do not win the prince's love, so that he forgets father and mother for your sake, is attached to you heart and soul, and tells the priest to join your hands, you will not receive an immortal soul. On the first morning after he has married another, your heart will break and you will become foam on the water.'

'I will do it,' said the little sea maid ; but she became as pale as death.

'But you must pay me, too,' said the witch ; 'and it is not a trifle that I ask. You have the finest voice of all here at the bottom of the water ; with that you think to enchant him ; but this voice you must give to me. The best thing you possess I will have for my costly draught ! I must give you my own blood in it, so that the draught may be sharp as a two-edged sword.'

'But if you take away my voice,' said the little sea maid, 'what will remain to me ?'

'Your beautiful form,' replied the witch, 'your graceful walk, and your eloquent eyes : with those you can take captive a human heart. Well, have you lost your courage ? Put out your little tongue, and then I will cut it off for my payment, and then you shall have the strong draught.'

'Let it be so,' said the little sea maid.

And the witch put on her pot to brew the draught.

'Cleanliness is a good thing,' said she ; and she cleaned out the pot with the snakes, which she tied up in a big knot ; then she scratched herself, and let her black blood drop into it. The steam rose up in the strangest forms, enough to frighten the beholder. Every moment the witch threw something else into the pot ; and when it boiled thoroughly, there was a sound like the weeping of a crocodile.

At last the draught was ready. It looked like the purest water.

‘There you have it,’ said the witch.

And she cut off the little sea maid’s tongue, so that now she was dumb, and could neither sing nor speak.

‘If the polypes should lay hold of you when you are returning through my forest,’ said the witch, ‘just cast a single drop of this liquor upon them, and their arms and fingers will fly into a thousand pieces.’ But the little sea maid had no need to do this: the polypes drew back in terror when they saw the shining liquor, that gleamed in her hand as if it were a twinkling star. In this way she soon passed through the forest, the moss, and the rushing whirlpools.

She could see her father’s palace. The torches were extinguished in the great dancing-hall, and they were certainly sleeping within, but she did not dare to go to them, now that she was dumb and was about to quit them for ever. She felt as if her heart would burst with sorrow. She crept into the garden, took a flower from each of her sisters’ flower-beds, blew a thousand kisses towards the palace, and rose up through the dark blue sea.

The sun had not yet risen when she beheld the prince’s castle and mounted the splendid marble staircase. The moon shone beautifully clear. The little sea maid drank the burning sharp draught, and it seemed as if a two-edged sword went through her delicate body. She fell down in a swoon, and lay as if she were dead. When the sun shone out over the sea she awoke, and felt a sharp pain; but just before her stood the handsome young prince. He fixed his coal-black eyes upon her, so that she cast down her own, and then she perceived that her fish-tail was gone, and that she had the prettiest pair of white feet a little girl could have. But she had no clothes, so she shrouded herself in her long hair. The prince asked who she was and how she had come there; and she looked at him mildly, but very mournfully, with her dark blue eyes, for she could not speak. Then he took her by the hand, and led her into the castle. Each step she took was, as the witch had told her, as if she had been treading on pointed needles and sharp knives, but she bore it gladly.

At the prince's right hand she moved on, light as a soap-bubble, and he, like all the rest, was astonished at her graceful swaying movements.

She now received splendid clothes of silk and muslin. In the castle she was the most beautiful of all; but she was dumb, and could neither sing nor speak. Lovely slaves, dressed in silk and gold, stepped forward, and sang before the prince and his royal parents; one sang more charmingly than all the rest, and the prince smiled at her and clapped his hands. Then the little sea maid became sad; she knew that she herself had sung far more sweetly, and thought,

'Oh! if only he could know that I have given away my voice for ever to be with him.'

Now the slaves danced pretty waving dances to the loveliest music; then the little sea maid lifted her beautiful white arms, stood on the tips of her toes, and glided dancing over the floor as no one had yet danced. At each movement her beauty became more apparent, and her eyes spoke more directly to the heart than the songs of the slaves.

All were delighted, and especially the prince, who called her his little foundling; and she danced again and again, although every time she touched the earth it seemed as if she were treading upon sharp knives. The prince said that she should always remain with him, and she received permission to sleep on a velvet cushion before his door.

He had a page's dress made for her, that she might accompany him on horseback. They rode through the fragrant woods, where the green boughs swept their shoulders and the little birds sang in the fresh leaves. She climbed with the prince up the high mountains, and although her delicate feet bled so that even the others could see it, she laughed at it herself, and followed him until they saw the clouds sailing beneath them like a flock of birds travelling to distant lands.

At home in the prince's castle, when the others slept at night, she went out on to the broad marble steps. It cooled her burning feet to stand in the cold sea water, and then she thought of the dear ones in the deep.

Once, in the night-time, her sisters came arm in arm.

Sadly they sang as they floated above the water : and she beckoned to them, and they recognized her, and told her how she had grieved them all. Then they visited her every night ; and once she saw in the distance her old grandmother, who had not been above the surface for many years, and the sea king with his crown upon his head. They stretched out their hands towards her, but did not venture so near the land as her sisters.

Day by day the prince grew more fond of her. He loved her as one loves a dear good child, but it never came into his head to make her his wife ; and yet she must become his wife, or she would not receive an immortal soul, and would have to become foam on the sea on his wedding morning.

‘ Do you not love me best of them all ? ’ the eyes of the little sea maid seemed to say, when he took her in his arms and kissed her fair forehead.

‘ Yes, you are the dearest to me ! ’ said the prince, ‘ for you have the best heart of them all. You are the most devoted to me, and are like a young girl whom I once saw, but whom I certainly shall not find again. I was on board a ship which was wrecked. The waves threw me ashore near a holy temple, where several young girls performed the service. The youngest of them found me by the shore and saved my life. I only saw her twice : she was the only one in the world I could love : but you chase her picture out of my mind, you are so like her. She belongs to the holy temple, and therefore my good fortune has sent you to me. We will never part ! ’

‘ Ah ! he does not know that I saved his life,’ thought the little sea maid. ‘ I carried him over the sea to the wood where the temple stands. I sat there under the foam and looked to see if any one would come. I saw the beautiful girl whom he loves better than me.’ And the sea maid sighed deeply—she could not weep. ‘ The maiden belongs to the holy temple,’ he has said, ‘ and will never come out into the world—they will meet no more. I am with him and see him every day ; I will cherish him, love him, give up my life for him.’

But now they said that the prince was to marry, and that the beautiful daughter of a neighbouring king was

to be his wife, and that was why such a beautiful ship was being prepared. The story was, that the prince travelled to visit the land of the neighbouring king, but it was done that he might see the king's daughter. A great company was to go with him. The little sea maid shook her head and smiled; she knew the prince's thoughts far better than any of the others.

'I must travel,' he had said to her; 'I must see the beautiful princess: my parents desire it, but they do not wish to compel me to bring her home as my bride. I cannot love her. She is not like the beautiful maiden in the temple, whom you resemble. If I were to choose a bride, I would rather choose you, my dear dumb foundling with the speaking eyes.'

And he kissed her red lips and played with her long hair, so that she dreamed of happiness and of an immortal soul.

'You are not afraid of the sea, my dumb child?' said he, when they stood on the superb ship which was to carry him to the country of the neighbouring king; and he told her of storm and calm, of strange fishes in the deep, and of what the divers had seen there. And she smiled at his tales, for she knew better than any one what there was at the bottom of the sea.

In the moonlight night, when all were asleep, except the steersman who stood by the helm, she sat on the side of the ship gazing down through the clear water. She fancied she saw her father's palace. High on the battlements stood her old grandmother, with the silver crown on her head, and looking through the rushing tide up to the vessel's keel. Then her sisters came forth over the water, and looked mournfully at her and wrung their white hands. She beckoned to them, smiled, and wished to tell them that she was well and happy; but the cabin-boy approached her, and her sisters dived down, so that he thought the white objects he had seen were foam on the surface of the water.

The next morning the ship sailed into the harbour of the neighbouring king's splendid city. All the church bells sounded, and from the high towers the trumpets were blown, while the soldiers stood there with flying colours and flashing bayonets. Each day brought some festivity with it;

balls and entertainments followed one another ; but the princess was not yet there. People said she was being educated in a holy temple far away, where she was learning every royal virtue. At last she arrived.

The little sea maid was anxious to see the beauty of the princess, and was obliged to acknowledge it. A more lovely apparition she had never beheld. The princess's skin was pure and clear, and behind the long dark eyelashes there smiled a pair of faithful dark blue eyes.

' You are the lady who saved me when I lay like a corpse upon the shore ! ' said the prince ; and he folded his blushing bride to his heart. ' Oh, I am too, too happy ! ' he cried to the little sea maid. ' The best hope I could have is fulfilled. You will rejoice at my happiness, for you are the most devoted to me of them all ! '

And the little sea maid kissed his hand ; and it seemed already to her as if her heart was broken, for his wedding morning was to bring death to her, and change her into foam on the sea.

All the church bells were ringing, and heralds rode about the streets announcing the betrothal. On every altar fragrant oil was burning in gorgeous lamps of silver. The priests swung their censers, and bride and bridegroom laid hand in hand, and received the bishop's blessing. The little sea maid was dressed in cloth of gold, and held up the bride's train ; but her ears heard nothing of the festive music, her eye marked not the holy ceremony ; she thought of the night of her death, and of all that she had lost in this world.

On the same evening the bride and bridegroom went on board the ship. The cannon roared, all the flags waved ; in the midst of the ship a costly tent of gold and purple, with the most beautiful cushions, had been set up, and there the married pair were to sleep in the cool still night.

The sails swelled in the wind and the ship glided smoothly and lightly over the clear sea. When it grew dark, coloured lamps were lighted and the sailors danced merry dances on deck. The little sea maid thought of the first time when she had risen up out of the sea, and beheld a similar scene of splendour and joy ; and she joined in the whirling dance, and flitted on as the swallow flits away when he is pur-

sued ; and all shouted and admired her, for she had danced so prettily. Her delicate feet were cut as if with knives, but she did not feel it, for her heart was wounded far more painfully. She knew this was the last evening on which she should see him for whom she had left her friends and her home, and had given up her beautiful voice, and had suffered unheard-of pains every day, while he was utterly unconscious of all. It was the last evening she should breathe the same air with him, and behold the starry sky and the deep sea ; and everlasting night without thought or dream awaited her, for she had no soul, and could win none. And everything was merriment and gladness on the ship till past midnight, and she laughed and danced with thoughts of death in her heart. The prince kissed his beautiful bride, and she played with his raven hair, and hand in hand they went to rest in the splendid tent.

It became quiet on the ship ; only the helmsman stood by the helm, and the little sea maid leaned her white arms upon the bulwark and gazed out towards the east for the morning dawn—the first ray, she knew, would kill her. Then she saw her sisters rising out of the flood ; they were pale, like herself ; their long beautiful hair no longer waved in the wind—it had been cut off.

‘ We have given it to the witch, that she might bring you help, so that you may not die to-night. She has given us a knife ; here it is—look ! how sharp ! Before the sun rises you must thrust it into the heart of the prince, and when the warm blood falls upon your feet they will grow together again into a fish-tail, and you will become a sea maid again, and come back to us, and live your three hundred years before you become dead salt sea foam. Make haste ! He or you must die before the sun rises ! Our old grandmother mourns so that her white hair has fallen off, as ours did under the witch’s scissors. Kill the prince and come back ! Make haste ! Do you see that red streak in the sky ? In a few minutes the sun will rise, and you must die ! ’

And they gave a very mournful sigh, and vanished beneath the waves.

The little sea maid drew back the purple curtain from

the tent, and saw the beautiful bride lying with her head on the prince's breast; and she bent down and kissed his brow, and gazed up to the sky where the morning red was gleaming brighter and brighter; then she looked at the sharp knife, and again fixed her eyes upon the prince, who in his sleep murmured his bride's name. She only was in his thoughts, and the knife trembled in the sea maid's hands. But then she flung it far away into the waves—they gleamed red where it fell, and it seemed as if drops of blood spurted up out of the water. Once more she looked with half-extinguished eyes upon the prince; then she threw herself from the ship into the sea, and felt her frame dissolving into foam.

Now the sun rose up out of the sea. The rays fell mild and warm upon the cold sea foam, and the little sea maid felt nothing of death. She saw the bright sun, and over her head sailed hundreds of glorious ethereal beings—she could see them through the white sails of the ship and the red clouds of the sky; their speech was melody, but of such a spiritual kind that no human ear could hear it, just as no earthly eye could see them; without wings they floated through the air. The little sea maid found that she had a frame like these, and was rising more and more out of the foam.

‘Whither am I going?’ she asked; and her voice sounded like that of the other beings, so spiritual, that no earthly music could be compared to it.

‘To the daughters of the air!’ replied the others. ‘A sea maid has no immortal soul, and can never gain one, except she win the love of a mortal. Her eternal existence depends upon the power of another. The daughters of the air have likewise no immortal soul, but they can make themselves one through good deeds. We fly to the hot countries, where the close pestilent air kills men, and there we bring coolness. We disperse the fragrance of the flowers through the air, and spread refreshment and health. After we have striven for three hundred years to accomplish all the good we can bring about, we receive an immortal soul and take part in the eternal happiness of men. You, poor little sea maid, have striven with your whole heart after the goal we pursue; you have suffered and endured;

you have by good works raised yourself to the world of spirits, and can gain an immortal soul after three hundred years.'

And the little sea maid lifted her bright arms towards God's sun, and for the first time she felt tears. On the ship there was again life and noise. She saw the prince and his bride searching for her; then they looked mournfully at the pearly foam, as if they knew that she had thrown herself into the waves. Invisible, she kissed the forehead of the bride, smiled to the prince, and mounted with the other children of the air on the rosy cloud which floated through the ether.

'After three hundred years we shall thus float into Paradise!'

'And we may even get there sooner,' whispered one. 'Invisibly we float into the houses of men where children are, and for every day on which we find a good child that brings joy to its parents and deserves their love, our time of probation is shortened. The child does not know when we fly through the room; and when we smile with joy at the child's conduct, a year is counted off from the three hundred; but when we see a naughty or a wicked child, we shed tears of grief, and for every tear a day is added to our time of trial.'

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

MANY years ago there lived an emperor, who cared so enormously for beautiful new clothes that he spent all his money upon them, that he might be very fine. He did not care about his soldiers, nor about the theatre, nor about driving in the park except to show his new clothes. He had a coat for every hour of the day; and just as they say of a king, 'He is in council,' one always said of him, 'The emperor is in the wardrobe.'

In the great city in which he lived it was always very merry; every day a number of strangers arrived there. One day two cheats came: they gave themselves out as weavers, and declared that they could weave the finest

stuff any one could imagine. Not only were their colours and patterns, they said, uncommonly beautiful, but the clothes made of the stuff possessed the wonderful quality that they became invisible to any one who was unfit for the office he held, or was incorrigibly stupid.

‘Those would be capital clothes!’ thought the emperor. ‘If I wore those, I should be able to find out what men in my empire are not fit for the places they have; I could distinguish the clever from the stupid. Yes, the stuff must be woven for me directly!’

And he gave the two cheats a great deal of cash in hand, that they might begin their work at once.

As for them, they put up two looms, and pretended to be working; but they had nothing at all on their looms. They at once demanded the finest silk and the costliest gold; this they put into their own pockets, and worked at the empty looms till late into the night.

‘I should like to know how far they have got on with the stuff,’ thought the emperor. But he felt quite uncomfortable when he thought that those who were not fit for their offices could not see it. He believed, indeed, that he had nothing to fear for himself, but yet he preferred first to send some one else to see how matters stood. All the people in the whole city knew what peculiar power the stuff possessed, and all were anxious to see how bad or how stupid their neighbours were.

‘I will send my honest old minister to the weavers,’ thought the emperor. ‘He can judge best how the stuff looks, for he has sense, and no one discharges his office better than he.’

Now the good old minister went out into the hall where the two cheats sat working at the empty looms.

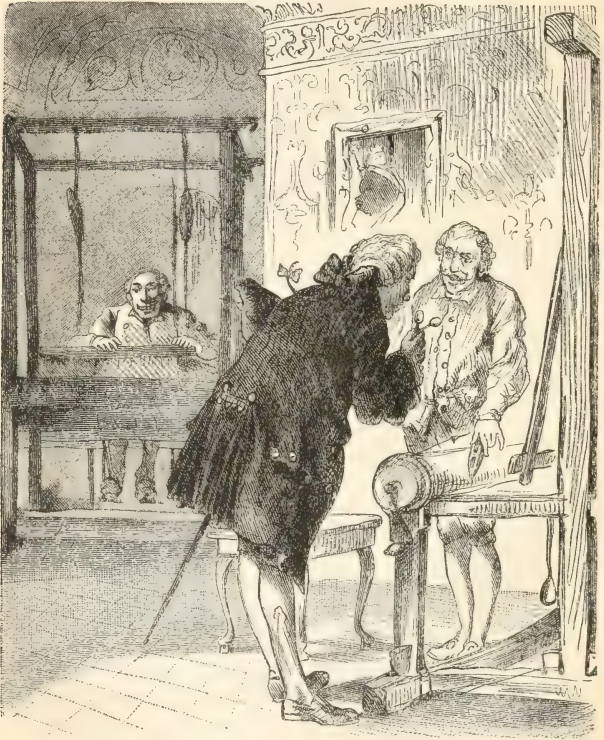
‘Mercy preserve us!’ thought the old minister, and he opened his eyes wide. ‘I cannot see anything at all!’ But he did not say this.

Both the cheats begged him to be kind enough to come nearer, and asked if he did not approve of the colours and the pattern. Then they pointed to the empty loom, and the poor old minister went on opening his eyes; but he could see nothing, for there was nothing to see.

‘Mercy!’ thought he, ‘can I indeed be so stupid?’

I never thought that, and not a soul must know it. Am I not fit for my office?—No, it will never do for me to tell that I could not see the stuff.'

'Do you say nothing to it?' said one of the weavers.



'Oh, it is charming—quite enchanting!' answered the old minister, as he peered through his spectacles. 'What a fine pattern, and what colours! Yes, I shall tell the emperor that I am very much pleased with it.'

'Well, we are glad of that,' said both the weavers;

and then they named the colours, and explained the strange pattern. The old minister listened attentively, that he might be able to repeat it when he went back to the emperor. And he did so.

Now the cheats asked for more money, and more silk and gold, which they declared they wanted for weaving. They put all into their own pockets, and not a thread was put upon the loom ; but they continued to work at the empty frames as before.

The emperor soon sent again, dispatching another honest statesman, to see how the weaving was going on, and if the stuff would soon be ready. He fared just like the first : he looked and looked, but, as there was nothing to be seen but the empty looms, he could see nothing.

‘Is not that a pretty piece of stuff?’ asked the two cheats ; and they displayed and explained the handsome pattern which was not there at all.

‘I am not stupid!’ thought the man—‘it must be my good office, for which I am not fit. It is funny enough, but I must not let it be noticed.’ And so he praised the stuff which he did not see, and expressed his pleasure at the beautiful colours and the charming pattern. ‘Yes, it is enchanting,’ he said to the emperor.

All the people in the town were talking of the gorgeous stuff. The emperor wished to see it himself while it was still upon the loom. With a whole crowd of chosen men, among whom were also the two honest statesmen who had already been there, he went to the two cunning cheats, who were now weaving with might and main without fibre or thread.

‘Is that not splendid?’ said the two old statesmen, who had already been there once. ‘Does not your majesty remark the pattern and the colours?’ And then they pointed to the empty loom, for they thought that the others could see the stuff.

‘What’s this?’ thought the emperor. ‘I can see nothing at all! That is terrible. Am I stupid? Am I not fit to be emperor? That would be the most dreadful thing that could happen to me.—Oh, it is *very* pretty!’ he said aloud. ‘It has our exalted approbation.’ And he nodded in a contented way, and gazed at the empty

loom, for he would not say that he saw nothing. The whole suite whom he had with him looked and looked, and saw nothing, any more than the rest ; but, like the emperor, they said, 'That is pretty !' and counselled him to wear these splendid new clothes for the first time at the great procession that was presently to take place. 'It is splendid, tasteful, excellent !' went from mouth to mouth. On all sides there seemed to be general rejoicing, and the emperor gave each of the cheats a cross to hang at his button-hole and the title of Imperial Court Weaver.

The whole night before the morning on which the procession was to take place the cheats were up, and had lighted more than sixteen candles. The people could see that they were hard at work, completing the emperor's new clothes. They pretended to take the stuff down from the loom ; they made cuts in the air with great scissors ; they sewed with needles without thread ; and at last they said, 'Now the clothes are ready !'

The emperor came himself with his noblest cavaliers ; and the two cheats lifted up one arm as if they were holding something, and said, 'See, here are the trousers ! here is the coat ! here is the cloak !' and so on. 'It is as light as a spider's web : one would think one had nothing on ; but that is just the beauty of it.'

'Yes,' said all the cavaliers ; but they could not see anything, for nothing was there.

'Does your imperial majesty please to condescend to undress ?' said the cheats ; 'then we will put you on the new clothes here in front of the great mirror.'

The emperor took off his clothes, and the cheats pretended to put on him each of the new garments, and they took him round the waist, and seemed to fasten on something ; that was the train ; and the emperor turned round and round before the mirror.

'Oh, how well they look ! how capitally they fit !' said all. 'What a pattern ! what colours ! That is a splendid dress !'

'They are standing outside with the canopy which is to be borne above your majesty in the procession !' announced the head master of the ceremonies.

'Well, I am ready,' replied the emperor. 'Does it not

suit me well ?' And then he turned again to the mirror, for he wanted it to appear as if he contemplated his adornment with great interest.

The chamberlains, who were to carry the train, stooped down with their hands towards the floor, just as if they were picking up the mantle ; then they pretended to be



holding something up in the air. They did not dare to let it be noticed that they saw nothing.

So the emperor went in procession under the rich canopy, and every one in the streets said, 'How incomparable are the emperor's new clothes ! what a train he has to his mantle ! how it fits him !' No one would let it be perceived that he could see nothing, for that would have shown that he was not fit for his office, or was very stupid. No clothes of the emperor's had ever had such a success as these.

'But he has nothing on !' a little child cried out at last.

'Just hear what that innocent says !' said the father ; and one whispered to another what the child had said. 'There is a little child that says he has nothing on.'

'But he has nothing on !' said the whole people at length. And the emperor shivered, for it seemed to him that they were right ; but he thought within himself, 'I must go through with the procession.' And so he carried himself still more proudly, and the chamberlains held on tighter than ever, and carried the train which did not exist at all.



THE GOLOSHES OF FORTUNE

I

A BEGINNING

IT was in Copenhagen, in East Street, and in one of the houses not far from the King's New Market, that a large company had assembled, for one must occasionally give a party, in order to be invited in return. Half of the company already sat at the card-tables, the other half awaited the result of the hostess's question, 'What shall we do now?' They had progressed so far, and the conversation went as best it could. Among other subjects the conversation turned upon the Middle Ages. Some considered that period much more interesting than our own times: yes, Councillor Knap defended this view so zealously that the lady of the house went over at once to his side; and both loudly exclaimed against Oersted's treatise in the Almanac on old and modern times, in which the chief advantage is given to our own day. The councillor considered the times of the Danish King Hans as the noblest and happiest age.

While the conversation takes this turn, only interrupted for a moment by the arrival of a newspaper, which contains nothing worth reading, we will betake ourselves to the ante-chamber, where the cloaks, sticks, and goloshes had found a place. Here sat two maids—an old one and a young one. One would have thought they had come to escort their mistresses home; but, on looking at them more closely, the observer could see that they were not ordinary servants: their hands were too fine for that, their bearing and all their movements too majestic, and the cut of their dresses too uncommon. They were two fairies. The younger was not Fortune, but lady's-maid to one of her ladies of the bed-chamber, who carry about the more trifling gifts of Fortune. The elder one looked somewhat more gloomy—she was Care, who always goes herself in her own exalted person to perform her business, for then she knows that it is well done.

They were telling each other where they had been that day. The messenger of Fortune had only transacted a few unimportant affairs, as, for instance, she had preserved a new bonnet from a shower of rain, had procured an honest man a bow from a titled Nobody, and so on ; but what she had still to relate was something quite extraordinary.

‘ I can likewise tell,’ said she, ‘ that to-day is my birthday ; and in honour of it a pair of goloshes has been entrusted to me, which I am to bring to the human race. These goloshes have the property that every one who puts them on is at once transported to the time and place in which he likes best to be—every wish in reference to time, place, and circumstance is at once fulfilled ; and so for once man can be happy here below ! ’

‘ Believe me,’ said Care, ‘ he will be very unhappy, and will bless the moment when he can get rid of the goloshes again.’

‘ What are you thinking of ? ’ retorted the other. ‘ Now I shall put them at the door. Somebody will take them by mistake, and become the happy one ! ’

You see, that was the dialogue they held.

II

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE COUNCILLOR

It was late. Councillor Knap, lost in contemplation of the times of King Hans, wished to get home ; and fate willed that instead of his own goloshes he should put on those of Fortune, and thus went out into East Street. But by the power of the goloshes he had been put back three hundred years—into the days of King Hans ; and therefore he put his foot into mud and mire in the street, because in those days there was not any pavement.

‘ Why, this is horrible—how dirty it is here ! ’ said the councillor. ‘ The good pavement is gone, and all the lamps are put out.’

The moon did not yet stand high enough to give much light, and the air was tolerably thick, so that all objects

seemed to melt together in the darkness. At the next corner a lamp hung before a picture of the Madonna, but the light it gave was as good as none ; he only noticed it when he stood just under it, and his eyes fell upon the painted figure of the mother and child.

‘That is probably a museum of art,’ he thought, ‘where they have forgotten to take down the sign.’

A couple of men in the costume of those past days went by him.

‘How they look !’ he said. ‘They must come from a masquerade.’

Suddenly there was a sound of drums and fifes, and torches gleamed brightly. The councillor started. And now he saw a strange procession go past. First came a whole troop of drummers, beating their instruments very dexterously ; they were followed by men-at-arms, with longbows and crossbows. The chief man in the procession was a clerical lord. The astonished councillor asked what was the meaning of this, and who the man might be.

‘That is the Bishop of Zealand.’

‘What in the world has come to the bishop ?’ said the councillor, with a sigh, shaking his head. ‘This could not possibly be the bishop !’

Ruminating on this, and without looking to the right or to the left, the councillor went through the East Street, and over the Highbridge Place. The bridge which led to the Palace Square was not to be found ; he perceived the shore of a shallow water, and at length encountered two people, who sat in a boat.

‘Do you wish to be ferried over to the Holm, sir ?’ they asked.

‘To the Holm !’ repeated the councillor, who did not know, you see, in what period he was. ‘I want to go to Christian’s Haven and to Little Turf Street.’

The men stared at him.

‘Pray tell me where the bridge is ?’ said he. ‘It is shameful that no lanterns are lighted here ; and it is as muddy, too, as if one were walking in a marsh.’ But the longer he talked with the boatmen the less could he understand them. ‘I don’t understand your Bornholm talk,’ he at last cried, angrily, and turned his back upon them.

He could not find the bridge, nor was there any paling. 'It is quite scandalous how things look here !' he said—never had he thought his own times so miserable as this evening. 'I think it will be best if I take a cab,' thought he. But where were the cabs ?—not one was to be seen. 'I shall have to go back to the King's New Market, where there are many carriages standing, otherwise I shall never get as far as Christian's Haven.'

Now he went towards East Street, and had almost gone through it when the moon burst forth.

'What in the world have they been erecting here ?' he exclaimed, when he saw the East Gate, which in those days stood at the end of East Street.

In the meantime, however, he found a passage open, and through this he came out upon our New Market ; but it was a broad meadow. Single bushes stood forth, and across the meadow ran a great canal or stream. A few miserable wooden booths for skippers from Holland were erected on the opposite shore.

'Either I behold a *Fata Morgana*, or I am tipsy,' sighed the councillor. 'What can that be ? what can that be ?'

He turned back, in the full persuasion that he must be ill. In walking up the street he looked more closely at the houses ; most of them were built of laths, and many were only thatched with straw.

'No, I don't feel well at all !' he lamented. 'And yet I only drank one glass of punch ! But I cannot stand that ; and besides, it was very foolish to give us punch and warm salmon. I shall mention that to our hostess—the agent's lady. Suppose I go back, and say how I feel ? But that looks ridiculous, and it is a question if they will be up still.'

He looked for the house, but could not find it.

'That is dreadful !' he cried ; 'I don't know East Street again. Not one shop is to be seen ; old, miserable, tumble-down huts are all I see, as if I were at Roskilde or Ringstedt. Oh, I am ill ! It's no use to make ceremony. But where in all the world is the agent's house ? It is no longer the same ; but within there are people up still. I certainly must be ill !'

He now reached a half-open door, where the light shone

through a chink. It was a tavern of that date—a kind of beer-house. The room had the appearance of a farmhouse kitchen in Holstein ; a number of people, consisting of seamen, citizens of Copenhagen, and a few scholars, sat in deep conversation over their jugs, and paid little attention to the new-comer.

‘ I beg pardon,’ said the councillor to the hostess, ‘ but I feel very unwell ; would you let them get me a fly to go to Christian’s Haven ? ’

The woman looked at him and shook her head ; then she spoke to him in German.

The councillor now supposed that she did not understand Danish, so he repeated his wish in the German language. This, and his costume, convinced the woman that he was a foreigner. She soon understood that he felt unwell, and therefore brought him a jug of water. It certainly tasted a little of sea water, though it had been taken from the spring outside.

The councillor leaned his head on his hand, drew a deep breath, and thought of all the strange things that were happening about him.

‘ Is that to-day’s number of the *Day* ? ’ he said, quite mechanically, for he saw that the woman was putting away a large sheet of paper.

She did not understand what he meant, but handed him the leaf : it was a woodcut representing a strange appearance in the air which had been seen in the city of Cologne.

‘ That is very old ! ’ said the councillor, who became quite cheerful at sight of this antiquity. ‘ How did you come by this strange leaf ? That is very interesting, although the whole thing is a fable. Nowadays these appearances are explained to be northern lights that have been seen ; probably they arise from electricity.’

Those who sat nearest to him and heard his speech, looked at him in surprise, and one of them rose, took off his hat respectfully, and said, with a very grave face,

‘ You must certainly be a very learned man, sir ! ’

‘ Oh, no ! ’ replied the councillor ; ‘ I can only say a word or two about things one ought to understand.’

‘ *Modestia* is a beautiful virtue,’ said the man. ‘ More-

over, I must say to your speech, *mihi secus videtur* ; yet I will gladly suspend my *judicium*.’

‘ May I ask with whom I have the pleasure of speaking ? ’ asked the councillor.

‘ I am a bachelor of theology,’ replied the man.

This answer sufficed for the councillor ; the title corresponded with the garb.

‘ Certainly,’ he thought, ‘ this must be an old village schoolmaster, a queer character, such as one finds sometimes over in Jutland.’

‘ This is certainly not a *locus docendi*,’ began the man ; ‘ but I beg you to take the trouble to speak. You are doubtless well read in the ancients ? ’

‘ Oh, yes,’ replied the councillor. ‘ I am fond of reading useful old books ; and am fond of the modern ones, too, with the exception of the “ Every-day Stories ”, of which we have enough, in all conscience.’

‘ Every-day Stories ? ’ replied the bachelor, inquiringly.

‘ Yes, I mean the new romances we have now.’

‘ Oh ! ’ said the man, with a smile, ‘ they are very witty, and are much read at court. The king is especially partial to the romance by Messieurs Iffven and Gaudian, which talks about King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table. He has jested about it with his noble lords.’

‘ That I have certainly not yet read,’ said the councillor ; ‘ that must be quite a new book published by Heiberg.’

‘ No,’ retorted the man, ‘ it is not published by Heiberg, but by Godfrey von Gehmen.’¹

‘ Indeed ! is he the author ? ’ asked the councillor. ‘ That is a very old name : was not that the name of about the first printer who appeared in Denmark ? ’

‘ Why, he *is* our first printer,’ replied the man.

So far it had gone well. Now one of the men began to speak of a pestilence which he said had been raging a few years ago : he meant the plague of 1484. The councillor supposed that he meant the cholera, and so the conversation went on tolerably. The Freebooters’ War of 1490 was so recent that it could not escape mention. The English pirates had taken ships from the very wharves,

¹ The first printer and publisher in Denmark, under King Hans.

said the man ; and the councillor, who was well acquainted with the events of 1801, joined in manfully against the English. The rest of the talk, however, did not pass over so well ; every moment there was a contradiction. The good bachelor was terribly ignorant, and the simplest assertion of the councillor seemed too bold or too fantastic. They looked at each other, and when it became too bad, the bachelor spoke Latin, in the hope that he would be better understood ; but it was of no use.

‘ How are you now ? ’ asked the hostess, and she plucked the councillor by the sleeve.

Now his recollection came back : in the course of the conversation he had forgotten everything that had happened.

‘ Good heavens ! where am I ? ’ he said, and he felt dizzy when he thought of it.

‘ We’ll drink claret, mead, and Bremen beer,’ cried one of the guests, ‘ and you shall drink with us.’

Two girls came in. One of them had on a cap of two colours. They poured out drink and bowed : the councillor felt a cold shudder running all down his back. ‘ What’s that ? what’s that ? ’ he cried ; but he was obliged to drink with them. They took possession of the good man quite politely. He was in despair, and when one said that he was tipsy he felt not the slightest doubt regarding the truth of the statement, and only begged them to procure him a droshky. Now they thought he was speaking Muscovite.

Never had he been in such rude vulgar company.

‘ One would think the country was falling back into heathenism,’ was his reflection. ‘ This is the most terrible moment of my life.’

But at the same time the idea occurred to him to bend down under the table, and then to creep to the door. He did so ; but just as he had reached the entry the others discovered his intention. They seized him by the feet ; and now the goloshes, to his great good fortune, came off, and—the whole enchantment vanished.

The councillor saw quite plainly, in front of him, a lamp burning, and behind it a great building ; everything looked familiar and splendid. It was East Street, as we know

it now. He lay with his legs turned towards a porch, and opposite to him sat the watchman asleep.

‘Good heavens! have I been lying here in the street dreaming?’ he exclaimed. ‘Yes, this is East Street sure enough! how splendidly bright and gay! It is terrible



what an effect that one glass of punch must have had on me!’

Two minutes afterwards he was sitting in a fly, which drove him out to Christian’s Haven. He thought of the terror and anxiety he had undergone, and praised from his heart the happy present, our own time, which, with all its shortcomings, was far better than the period in which he had been placed a short time before.

III

THE WATCHMAN’S ADVENTURES

‘On my word, yonder lies a pair o’ goloshes!’ said the watchman. ‘They must certainly belong to the lieutenant who lives upstairs. They are lying close to the door.’

The honest man would gladly have rung the bell and delivered them, for upstairs there was a light still burning; but he did not wish to disturb the other people in the house, and so he let it alone.

‘It must be very warm to have a pair of such things on,’ said he. ‘How nice and soft the leather is!’ They fitted

his feet very well. 'How droll it is in the world! Now, he might lie down in his warm bed, and yet he does not! There he is pacing up and down the room. He is a happy man! He has neither wife nor children, and every evening he is at a party. Oh, I wish I were he, then I should be a happy man!'

As he uttered the wish, the goloshes he had put on produced their effect, and the watchman was transported into the body and being of the lieutenant. Then he stood up in the room, and held a little pink paper in his fingers, on which was a poem, a poem written by the lieutenant himself. For who is there who has not once in his life had a poetic moment? and at such a moment, if one writes down one's thoughts, there is poetry.

Yes, people write poetry when they are in love; but a prudent man does not print such poems. The lieutenant was in love—and poor—that's a triangle, or, so to speak, the half of a broken square of happiness. The lieutenant felt that very keenly, and so he laid his head against the window-frame and sighed a deep sigh.

'The poor watchman in the street yonder is far happier than I. He does not know what I call want. He has a home, a wife, and children, who weep at his sorrow and rejoice at his joy. Oh! I should be happier than I am, if I could pass right over into him, for he is happier than I!'

In that same moment the watchman became a watchman again; for through the power of the goloshes of Fortune he had assumed the personality of the lieutenant; but then we know he felt far less content, and preferred to be what he really was. So the watchman became a watchman again.

'That was an ugly dream,' said he, 'but droll enough. It seemed to me that I was the lieutenant up yonder, and that it was not pleasant at all. I missed the wife and the boys, who are now ready to half stifle me with kisses.'

He sat down again and nodded. The dream would not go quite out of his thoughts. He had the goloshes still on his feet. A falling star glided down the sky.

'There went one,' said he, 'but for all that, there are enough left. I should like to look at those things a little

nearer, especially the moon, for that won't vanish under one's hands. The student for whom my wife washes says that when we die we fly from one star to another. That's not true, but it would be very nice. If I could only make a little spring up there, then my body might lie here on the stairs for all I care.'

Now there are certain things we should be very cautious of uttering in this world, but doubly careful when we have goloshes of Fortune on our feet. Just hear what happened to the watchman.

So far as we are concerned, we all understand the rapidity



of dispatch by steam ; we have tried it either in railways, or in steamers across the sea. But this speed is as the crawling of the sloth or the march of the snail in comparison with the swiftness with which light travels. That flies nineteen million times quicker than the best racer, and yet electricity is still quicker. Death is an electric shock we receive in our hearts, and on the wings of electricity the liberated soul flies away. The sunlight requires eight minutes and a few seconds for a journey of more than ninety-five millions of miles ; on the wings of electric power the soul requires only a few moments to accomplish the same flight. The space between the orbs of the universe is, for her, not greater than, for us, the distances between

the houses of our friends dwelling in the same town and even living close together. Yet this electric shock costs us the life of the body here below, unless, like the watchman, we have the magic goloshes on.

In a few seconds the watchman had traversed the distance of two hundred and sixty thousand miles to the moon, which body, as we know, consists of a much lighter material than that of our earth, and is, as we should say, soft as new-fallen snow. He found himself on one of the many ring mountains with which we are familiar from Dr. Mädler's great map of the moon. Within the ring a great bowl-shaped hollow went down to the depth of a couple of miles. At the base of the hollow lay a town, of whose appearance we can only form an idea by pouring the white of an egg into a glass of water: the substance here was just as soft as white of egg, and formed similar towers, and cupolas, and terraces like sails, transparent and floating in the thin air. Our earth hung over his head like a great fiery red ball.

He immediately became aware of a number of beings, who were certainly what we call 'men', but their appearance was very different from ours. They had also a language, but no one could expect that the soul of the watchman should understand it. But it did understand, nevertheless.

Thus the watchman's soul understood the language of the people in the moon very well. They disputed about this earth, and doubted if it could be inhabited; the air, they asserted, must be too thick for a sensible moon-man to live there. They considered that the moon alone was peopled; for that, they said, was the real body in which the old-world people dwelt. They also talked of politics.

But let us go down to the East Street, and see how it fared with the body of the watchman.

He sat lifeless upon the stairs. His pike had fallen out of his hand, and his eyes stared up at the moon, after his honest soul which was going about up there.

'What's o'clock, watchman?' asked a passer-by. But the man who didn't answer was the watchman. Then the passenger tweaked him quite gently by the nose, and then he lost his balance. There lay the body stretched out at

full length—the man was dead. Great fear fell upon the man who had tweaked him ; dead the watchman was, and dead he remained. It was reported, and it was discussed, and in the morning the body was carried out to the hospital.

That would be a pretty jest for the soul if it should chance to come back, and probably seek its body in the East Street, and not find it ! Most likely it would go first to the police and afterwards to the address office, that inquiries might be made from thence respecting the missing goods ; and then it would wander out to the hospital. But we may console ourselves with the idea that the soul is most clever when it acts upon its own account ; it is the body that makes it stupid.

As we have said, the watchman's body was taken to the hospital, and brought into the washing-room ; and naturally enough the first thing they did there was to pull off the goloshes ; and then the soul had to come back. It took its way directly towards the body, and in a few seconds there was life in the man. He declared that this had been the most terrible night of his life ; he would not have such feelings again, not for a shilling ; but now it was past and over.

The same day he was allowed to leave ; but the goloshes remained at the hospital.

IV

A GREAT MOMENT.—A VERY UNUSUAL JOURNEY

Every one who belongs to Copenhagen knows the look of the entrance to the Frederick's Hospital in Copenhagen ; but as, perhaps, a few will read this story who do not belong to Copenhagen, it becomes necessary to give a short description of it.

The hospital is separated from the street by a tolerably high railing, in which the thick iron rails stand so far apart, that certain very thin inmates are said to have squeezed between them, and thus paid their little visits outside the premises. The part of the body most difficult to get through was the head ; and here, as it often happens

in the world, small heads were the most fortunate. This will be sufficient as an introduction.

One of the young volunteers, of whom one could only say in one sense that he had a great head, had the watch that evening. The rain was pouring down ; but in spite of this obstacle he wanted to go out, only for a quarter of an hour. It was needless, he thought, to tell the porter



of his wish, especially if he could slip through between the rails. There lay the goloshes which the watchman had forgotten. It never occurred to him in the least that they were goloshes of Fortune. They would do him very good service in this rainy weather, and he pulled them on. Now the question was whether he could squeeze through the bars ; till now he had never tried it. There he stood.

‘ I wish to goodness I had my head outside ! ’ cried he. And immediately, though his head was very thick and

big, it glided easily and quickly through. The goloshes must have understood it well ; but now the body was to slip through also, and that could not be done.

‘I’m too fat,’ said he. ‘I thought my head would be the worst thing. I shan’t get through.’

Now he wanted to pull his head back quickly, but he could not manage it : he could move his neck, but that was all. His first feeling was one of anger, and then his spirits sank down to zero. The goloshes of Fortune had placed him in this terrible condition, and, unfortunately, it never occurred to him to wish himself free. No : instead of wishing, he only strove, and could not stir from the spot. The rain poured down ; not a creature was to be seen in the street ; he could not reach the gate-bell, and how was he to get loose ? He foresaw that he would have to remain here until the morning, and then they would have to send for a blacksmith, to file through the iron bars. But such a business is not to be done quickly. The whole charity school opposite would be upon its legs ; the whole sailors’ quarter close by would come up and see him standing in the pillory ; and a fine crowd there would be.

‘Ugh !’ he cried, ‘the blood’s rising to my head, and I shall go mad ! Yes, I’m going mad ! O I wish I were free again, then most likely it would pass over.’

That’s what he ought to have said a little sooner. The very moment he had uttered the thought his head was free ; and now he rushed in, quite dazed with the fright the goloshes of Fortune had given him. But we must not think the whole affair was over ; there was much worse to come yet.

The night passed away, and the following day too, and nobody sent for the goloshes. In the evening a representation was to take place in an amateur theatre in a distant street. The house was crammed ; and among the audience was the volunteer from the hospital, who appeared to have forgotten his adventure of the previous evening. He had the goloshes on, for they had not been sent for ; and as it was dirty in the streets, they might do him good service. A new piece was recited : it was called *My Aunt’s Spectacles*. These were spectacles which, when any one put them on in a great assembly of people, made all present look like

cards, so that one could prophesy from them all that would happen in the coming year.

The idea struck him : he would have liked to possess such a pair of spectacles. If they were used rightly, they would enable the wearer to look into people's hearts ; and that, he thought, would be more interesting than to see what was going to happen in the next year ; for future events would be known in time, but the people's thoughts never.

'Now I'll look at the row of ladies and gentlemen on the first bench : if one could look directly into their hearts ! yes, that must be a hollow, a sort of shop. How my eyes would wander about in that shop ! In every lady's, yonder, I should doubtless find a great milliner's warehouse : with this one here the shop is empty, but it would do no harm to have it cleaned out. But there would also be substantial shops. Ah, yes !' he continued, sighing, 'I know one in which all the goods are first-rate, but there's a shopman in it already ; that's the only drawback in the whole shop ! From one and another the word would be "Please to step in !" Oh that I might only step in, like a neat little thought, and slip through their hearts !'

That was the word of command for the goloshes. The volunteer shrivelled up, and began to take a very remarkable journey through the hearts of the first row of spectators. The first heart through which he passed was that of a lady : but he immediately fancied himself in the Orthopaedic Institute, in the room where the plaster casts of deformed limbs are kept hanging against the walls ; the only difference was, that these casts were formed in the institute when the patients came in, but here in the heart they were formed and preserved after the good persons had gone away. For they were casts of female friends, whose bodily and mental faults were preserved here.

Quickly he had passed into another female heart. But this seemed to him like a great holy church ; the white dove of innocence fluttered over the high altar. Gladly would he have sunk down on his knees ; but he was obliged to go away into the next heart. Still, however, he heard the tones of the organ, and it seemed to him that he

himself had become another and a better man. He felt himself not unworthy to enter into the next sanctuary, which showed itself in the form of a poor garret, containing a sick mother. But through the window the warm sun streamed in, beautiful roses nodded from the little wooden box on the roof, and two sky-blue birds sang full of child-like joy, while the sick mother prayed for a blessing on her daughter.

Now he crept on his hands and knees through an over-filled butcher's shop. There was meat, and nothing but meat, wherever he went. It was the heart of a rich respectable man, whose name is certainly to be found in the directory.

Now he was in the heart of this man's wife : this heart was an old dilapidated pigeon-house. The husband's portrait was used as a mere weathercock : it stood in connexion with the doors, and these doors opened and shut according as the husband turned.

Then he came into a cabinet of mirrors, such as we find in the castle of Rosenborg ; but the mirrors magnified in a great degree. In the middle of the floor sat, like a Grand Lama, the insignificant *I* of the proprietor, astonished in the contemplation of his own greatness.

Then he fancied himself transported into a narrow needle-case full of pointed needles ; and he thought, ' This must decidedly be the heart of an old maid ! ' But that was not the case. It was a young officer, wearing several orders, and of whom one said, ' He 's a man of intellect and heart.'

Quite confused was the poor volunteer when he emerged from the heart of the last person in the first row. He could not arrange his thoughts, and fancied it must be his powerful imagination which had run away with him.

' Gracious powers ! ' he sighed, ' I must certainly have a great tendency to go mad. It is also unconscionably hot in here : the blood is rising to my head ! '

And now he remembered the great event of the last evening, how his head had been caught between the iron rails of the hospital.

' That 's where I must have caught it,' thought he. ' I must do something at once. A Russian bath might be

very good. I wish I were already lying on the highest board in the bath-house.'

And there he lay on the highest board in the vapour bath; but he was lying there in all his clothes, in boots and goloshes, and the hot drops from the ceiling were falling on his face.

'Hi!' he cried, and jumped down to take a plunge bath.

The attendant uttered a loud cry on seeing a person there with all his clothes on. The volunteer had, however, enough presence of mind to whisper to him, 'It's for a wager!' But the first thing he did when he got into his own room was to put a big blister on the nape of his neck, and another on his back, that they might draw out his madness.

Next morning he had a very sore back; and that was all he had got by the goloshes of Fortune.

V

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE COPYING CLERK

The watchman, whom we assuredly have not yet forgotten, in the meantime thought of the goloshes, which he had found and brought to the hospital. He took them away; but as neither the lieutenant nor any one in the street would own them, they were taken to the police office.

'They look exactly like my own goloshes,' said one of the copying gentlemen, as he looked at the unowned articles and put them beside his own. 'More than a shoe-maker's eye is required to distinguish them from one another.'

'Mr. Copying Clerk,' said a servant, coming in with some papers.

The copying clerk turned and spoke to the man: when he had done this, he turned to look at the goloshes again; he was in great doubt if the right-hand or the left-hand pair belonged to him.

'It must be those that are wet,' he thought. Now here

he thought wrong, for these were the goloshes of Fortune ; but why should not the police be sometimes mistaken ? He put them on, thrust some papers into his pocket, and put a few manuscripts under his arm, for they were to be read at home, and abstracts to be made from them. But now it was Sunday morning, and the weather was fine. ' A walk to Fredericksberg would do me good,' said he ; and he went out accordingly.

There could not be a quieter, steadier person than this young man. We grant him his little walk with all our hearts ; it will certainly do him good after so much sitting. At first he only walked without thinking of anything, so the goloshes had no opportunity of displaying their magic power.

In the avenue he met an acquaintance, a young poet, who told him that he was going to start, next day, on a summer trip.

' Are you going away again already ? ' asked the copying clerk. ' What a happy, free man you are ! You can fly wherever you like ; we others have a chain to our foot.'

' But it is fastened to the bread tree ! ' replied the poet. ' You need not be anxious for the morrow ; and when you grow old you get a pension.'

' But you are better off, after all,' said the copying clerk. ' It must be a pleasure to sit and write poetry. Everybody says agreeable things to you, and then you are your own master. Ah, you should just try it, poring over the frivolous affairs in the court.'

The poet shook his head ; the copying clerk shook his head also : each retained his own opinions ; and thus they parted.

' They are a strange race, these poets ! ' thought the copying clerk. ' I should like to try and enter into such a nature—to become a poet myself. I am certain I should not write such complaining verses as the rest. What a splendid spring day for a poet ! The air is so remarkably clear, the clouds are so beautiful, and the green smells so sweet. For many years I have not felt as I feel at this moment.'

We already notice that he has become a poet. It was

certainly not an obvious change, for it is a foolish fancy to imagine a poet different from other people, for among the latter there may be natures more poetical than those of many an acknowledged poet. The difference is only that the poet has a better spiritual memory : he can hold fast the feeling and the idea until they are embodied clearly and firmly in words ; and the others cannot do that. But the transition from an every-day nature to that of a poet is always a transition, and as such it must be noticed in the copying clerk.

‘ What glorious fragrance ! ’ he cried. ‘ How it reminds me of the violets at Aunt Laura’s ! Yes, that was when I was a little boy. I have not thought of that for a long time. The good old lady ! She lived over there behind the Exchange. She always had a twig or a couple of green shoots in water, let the winter be as severe as it might. The violets bloomed, while I had to put warm farthings against the frozen window-panes to make peep-holes. That was a pretty view. Out in the canal the ships were frozen in, and deserted by the whole crew ; a screaming crow was the only living creature left. Then, when the spring breezes blew, it all became lively : the ice was sawn asunder amid shouting and cheers, the ships were tarred and rigged, and then they sailed away to strange lands. I remained here, and must always remain, and sit at the police office, and let others take passports for abroad. That’s my fate. Oh, yes ! ’ and he sighed deeply. Suddenly he paused. ‘ Good heaven ! what is come to me ? I never thought or felt as I do now. It must be the spring air : it is both charming and agreeable ! ’ He felt in his pockets for his papers. ‘ These will give me something else to think of,’ said he, and let his eyes wander over the first leaf. There he read : ‘ *Dame Sigbrith ; an original tragedy in five acts.* What is that ? And it is my own hand. Have I written this tragedy ? *The Intrigue on the Promenade ; or, the Day of Penance.—Vaudeville.* But where did I get that from ? It must have been put into my pocket. Here is a letter. Yes, it was from the manager of the theatre ; the pieces were rejected, and the letter is not at all politely worded. H’m ! H’m ! ’ said the copying clerk, and he sat down upon a bench : his

thoughts were so living, his heart so soft. Involuntarily he grasped one of the nearest flowers ; it was a common little daisy. What the botanists require several lectures to explain to us, this flower told in a minute. It told the story of its birth ; it told of the strength of the sunlight, which spread out the delicate leaves and made them give out fragrance. Then he thought of the battles of life, which likewise awaken feelings in our breasts. Air and light are the lovers of the flower, but light is the favoured one. Towards the light it turned, and only when the light vanished the flower rolled her leaves together and slept in the embrace of the air.

‘ It is light that adorns me ! ’ said the flower.

‘ But the air allows you to breathe,’ whispered the poet’s voice.

Just by him stood a boy, knocking with his stick in a muddy ditch. The drops of water spurted up among the green twigs, and the copying clerk thought of the millions of invisible animals which were cast up on high with the drops, which was the same to them, in proportion to their size, as it would be to us if we were hurled high over the clouds. And the copying clerk thought of this, and of the great change which had taken place within him ; he smiled. ‘ I sleep and dream ! It is wonderful, though, how naturally one can dream, and yet know all the time that it is a dream. I should like to be able to remember it all clearly to-morrow when I wake. I seem to myself quite unusually excited. What a clear appreciation I have of everything, and how free I feel ! But I am certain that if I remember anything of it to-morrow, it will be nonsense. That has often been so with me before. It is with all the clever famous things one says and hears in dreams, as with the money of the elves under the earth ; when one receives it, it is rich and beautiful, but looked at by daylight, it is nothing but stones and dried leaves. Ah ! ’ he sighed, quite plaintively, and gazed at the chirping birds, as they sprang merrily from bough to bough, ‘ they are much better off than I. Flying is a noble art. Happy he who is born with wings. Yes, if I could change myself into anything, it should be into a lark.’

In a moment his coat-tails and sleeves grew together

and formed wings ; his clothes became feathers, and his goloshes claws. He noticed it quite plainly, and laughed inwardly. ' Well, now I can see that I am dreaming, but I have never dreamed before so wildly.' And he flew up into the green boughs and sang ; but there was no poetry in the song, for the poetic nature was gone. The goloshes, like every one who wishes to do any business thoroughly, could only do one thing at a time. He wished to be a poet, and he became one. Then he wished to be a little bird, and, in changing thus, the former peculiarity was lost.

' That is very funny ! ' he said. ' In the daytime I sit in the police office among the driest of law papers ; at night I can dream that I am flying about, as a lark in the Fredericksberg Garden. One could really write quite a popular comedy upon it.'

Now he flew down into the grass, turned his head in every direction, and beat with his beak upon the bending stalks of grass, which, in proportion to his size, seemed to him as long as palm branches of Northern Africa.

It was only for a moment, and then all around him became as the blackest night. It seemed to him that some immense substance was cast over him ; it was a great cap, which a boy threw over the bird. A hand came in and seized the copying clerk by the back and wings in a way that made him chirp. In his first terror he cried aloud, ' You impudent rascal ! I am copying clerk at the police office ! ' But that sounded to the boy only like ' piep ! piep ! ' and he tapped the bird on the beak and wandered on with him.

In the alley the boy met with two other boys, who belonged to the educated classes, socially speaking ; but, according to abilities, they ranked in the lowest class in the school. These bought the bird for threepence ; and so the copying clerk was carried back to Copenhagen.

' It's a good thing that I am dreaming,' he said, ' or I should become really angry. First I was a poet, and now I'm a lark ! Yes, it must have been the poetic nature which transformed me into that little creature. It is a miserable state of things, especially when one falls into the hands of boys. I should like to know what the end of it will be.'

The boys carried him into a very elegant room. A stout smiling lady received them. But she was not at all gratified to see the common field bird, as she called the lark, coming in too. Only for that day she would consent to it ; but they must put the bird in the empty cage which stood by the window.

‘ Perhaps that will please Polly,’ she added, and laughed at a great parrot swinging himself proudly in his ring in the handsome brass cage.

‘ It ’s Polly’s birthday,’ she said, fatuously, ‘ so the little field bird shall congratulate him.’

Polly did not answer a single word ; he only swung proudly to and fro. But a pretty canary bird, who had been brought here last summer out of his warm fragrant fatherland, began to sing loudly.

‘ Screamer !’ said the lady ; and she threw a white handkerchief over the cage.

‘ Piep ! piep !’ sighed he ; ‘ here ’s a terrible snow-storm.’ And thus sighing, he was silent.

The copying clerk, or, as the lady called him, the field bird, was placed in a little cage close to the canary, and not far from the parrot. The only human words which Polly could say, and which often sounded very comically, were, ‘ *Come, let ’s be men now !*’ Everything else that he screamed out was just as unintelligible as the song of the canary bird, except for the copying clerk, who was now also a bird, and who understood his comrades very well.

‘ I flew under the green palm tree and the blossoming almond tree !’ sang the canary. I flew with my brothers and sisters over the beautiful flowers and over the bright sea, where the plants waved in the depths. I also saw many beautiful parrots, who told the merriest stories.’

‘ Those were wild birds,’ replied the parrot. ‘ They had no education. Let us be men now ! Why don’t you laugh ? If the lady and all the strangers could laugh at it, so can you. It is a great fault to have no taste for what is humorous. No, let us be men now.’

‘ Do you remember the pretty girls who danced under the tents spread out beneath the blooming trees ? Do you remember the sweet fruits and the cooling juice in the wild plants ?’

‘Oh, yes!’ replied the parrot; ‘but here I am far better off. I have good care and genteel treatment. I know I’ve a good head, and I don’t ask for more. Let us be men now. You are what they call a poetic soul. I have thorough knowledge and wit. You have genius, but no prudence. You mount up into those high natural notes of yours, and then you get covered up. That is never done to me; no, no, for I cost them a little more. I make an impression with my beak, and can cast wit round me. Now let us be men!’

‘O my warm flowery fatherland!’ sang the canary. ‘I will praise thy dark green trees and thy quiet bays, where the branches kiss the clear watery mirror; I’ll sing of the joy of all my shining brothers and sisters, where the plants grow by the desert springs.’

‘Now, pray leave off these dismal tones,’ cried the parrot. ‘Sing something at which one can laugh! Laughter is the sign of the highest mental development. Look if a dog or a horse can laugh! No: they can cry; but laughter—that is given to men alone. Ho! ho! ho!’ screamed Polly, and finished the jest with ‘Let us be men now.’

‘You little grey Danish bird,’ said the canary; ‘so you have also become a prisoner. It is certainly cold in your woods, but still liberty is there. Fly out! they have forgotten to close your cage; the upper window is open. Fly! fly!’

Instinctively the copying clerk obeyed, and flew forth from his prison. At the same moment the half-opened door of the next room creaked, and stealthily, with fierce sparkling eyes, the house cat crept in, and made chase upon him. The canary fluttered in its cage, the parrot flapped its wings, and cried, ‘Let us be men now.’ The copying clerk felt mortally afraid, and flew through the window, away over the houses and streets; at last he was obliged to rest a little.

The house opposite had a homelike look: one of the windows stood open, and he flew in. It was his own room: he perched upon the table.

‘Let us be men now,’ he broke out, involuntarily imitating the parrot; and in the same moment he was restored to the form of the copying clerk; but he was sitting on the table.

‘Heaven preserve me!’ he cried. ‘How could I have come here and fallen so soundly asleep? That was an unquiet dream, too, that I had. The whole thing was great nonsense.’

VI

THE BEST THAT THE GOLOSHES BROUGHT

On the following day, quite early in the morning, as the clerk still lay in bed, there came a tapping at his door: it was his neighbour who lodged on the same floor, a young theologian; and he came in.

‘Lend me your goloshes,’ said he. ‘It is very wet in the garden, but the sun shines gloriously, and I should like to smoke a pipe down there.’

He put on the goloshes, and was soon in the garden, which contained a plum tree and a pear tree. Even a little garden like this is highly prized in Copenhagen.

The student wandered up and down the path; it was only six o’clock, and a post-horn sounded out in the street.

‘Oh, travelling! travelling!’ he cried out, ‘that’s the greatest happiness in all the world. That’s the highest goal of my wishes. Then this disquietude that I feel would be stilled. But it would have to be far away. I should like to see beautiful Switzerland, to travel through Italy, to——’

Yes, it was a good thing that the goloshes took effect immediately, for he might have gone too far even for himself, and for us others too. He was travelling; he was in the midst of Switzerland, packed tightly with eight others in the interior of a diligence. He had a headache and a weary feeling in his neck, and his feet had gone to sleep, for they were swollen by the heavy boots he had on. He was hovering in a condition between sleeping and waking. In his right-hand pocket he had his letter of credit, in his left-hand pocket his passport, and a few louis d’or were sewn into a little bag he wore on his breast. Whenever he dozed off, he dreamed he had lost one or other of these possessions; and then he would start up in a feverish way, and the first movement his hand made

was to describe a triangle from left to right, and towards his breast, to feel whether he still possessed them or not. Umbrellas, hats, and walking-sticks swung in the net over him, and almost took away the prospect, which was impressive enough : he glanced out at it, and his heart



sang what one poet at least, whom we know, has sung in Switzerland, but has not yet printed :

'Tis a prospect as fine as heart can desire
Before me Mont Blanc the rough :
'Tis pleasant to tarry here and admire,
If only you've money enough.

Great, grave, and dark was all nature around him. The pine woods looked like tufts of heather upon the high rocks, whose summits were lost in cloudy mists ; and then it began to snow, and the wind blew cold.

'Ugh !' he sighed : ' if we were only on the other side of the Alps, then it would be summer, and I should have got money on my letter of credit : my anxiety about this prevents me from enjoying Switzerland. Oh, if I were only at the other side ! '

And then he was on the other side, in the midst of Italy, between Florence and Rome. The lake Thrasymentine lay spread out in the evening light, like flaming gold among the dark blue hills. Here, where Hannibal beat Flaminius,

the grape-vines held each other by their green fingers ; pretty half-naked children were keeping a herd of coal-black pigs under a clump of fragrant laurels by the wayside. If we could reproduce this scene accurately, all would cry, ' Glorious Italy ! ' But neither the theologian nor any of his travelling companions in the carriage of the vetturino thought this.

Poisonous flies and gnats flew into the carriage by thousands. In vain they beat the air frantically with a myrtle branch—the flies stung them nevertheless. There was not one person in the carriage whose face was not swollen and covered with stings. The poor horses looked miserable, the flies tormented them wofully, and it only mended the matter for a moment when the coachman dismounted and scraped them clean from the insects that sat upon them in great swarms. Now the sun sank down ; a short but icy coldness pervaded all nature ; it was not at all agreeable, but all around the hills and clouds put on the most beautiful green colour, so clear, so shining—yes, go and see it in person, that is better than any description. It was a glorious spectacle ; but the stomachs of all were empty and their bodies exhausted, and every wish of the heart turned towards a resting-place for the night ; but how could that be won ? To descry this resting-place all eyes were turned more eagerly to the road than towards the beauties of nature.

The way now led through an olive wood : he could have fancied himself passing between knotty willow trunks at home. Here, by the solitary inn, a dozen crippled beggars had taken up their positions : the quickest among them looked, to quote an expression of Marryat's, like the eldest son of Famine, who had just come of age. The others were either blind or had withered legs, so that they crept about on their hands, or they had withered arms with fingerless hands. This was misery in rags indeed. '*Eccellenza, miserabili !*' they sighed, and stretched forth their diseased limbs. The hostess herself, with bare feet, untidy hair, and dressed in a dirty blouse, received her guests. The doors were tied up with string ; the floor of the room was of brick, and half of it was grubbed up ; bats flew about under the roof, and the smell within—

‘Yes, lay the table down in the stable,’ said one of the travellers. ‘There, at least, one knows what one is breathing.’

The windows were opened, so that a little fresh air might find its way in ; but quicker than the air came the withered arms and the continual whining, ‘*Miserabili, Eccellenza !*’ On the walls were many inscriptions ; half of them were against ‘*La bella Italia.*’

The supper was served. It consisted of a watery soup, seasoned with pepper and rancid oil. This last dainty played a chief part in the salad ; musty eggs and roasted cocks’-combs were the best dishes. Even the wine had a strange taste—it was a dreadful mixture.

At night the boxes were placed against the doors. One of the travellers kept watch while the rest slept. The theologian was the sentry. Oh, how close it was in there ! The heat oppressed him, the gnats buzzed and stung, and the *miserabili* outside moaned in their dreams.

‘Yes, travelling would be all very well,’ said the theologian, ‘if one had no body. If the body could rest, and the mind fly ! Wherever I go, I find a want that oppresses my heart : it is something better than the present moment that I desire. Yes, something better—the best ; but what is that, and where is it ? In my own heart I know very well what I want : I want to attain to a happy goal, the happiest of all !’

And as soon as the word was spoken he found himself at home. The long white curtains hung down from the windows, and in the middle of the room stood a black coffin ; in this he was lying in the quiet sleep of death : his wish was fulfilled—his body was at rest and his spirit roaming. ‘Esteem no man happy who is not yet in his grave,’ were the words of Solon ; here their force was proved anew.

Every corpse is a sphinx of immortality ; the sphinx here also in the black sarcophagus answered, what the living man had laid down two days before :

Thou strong, stern Death ! Thy silence waketh fear,
Thou leavest mould’ring gravestones for thy traces.
Shall not the soul see Jacob’s ladder here ?
No resurrection type but churchyard grasses ?

The deepest woes escape the world's dull eye :
Thou that alone on duty's path hast sped,
Heavier those duties on thy heart would lie
Than lies the earth now on thy confined head.

Two forms were moving to and fro in the room. We know them both. They were the Fairy of Care and the Ambassadors of Happiness. They bent down over the dead man.

'Do you see?' said Care. 'What happiness have your goloshes brought to men?'

'They have at least brought a permanent benefit to him who slumbers here,' replied Happiness.

'Oh, no!' said Care. 'He went away of himself, he was not summoned. His spirit was not strong enough to lift the treasures which he had been destined to lift. I will do him a favour.'

And she drew the goloshes from his feet; then the sleep of death was ended, and the awakened man raised himself up. Care vanished, and with her the goloshes disappeared too: doubtless she looked upon them as her property.

THE HARDY TIN SOLDIER

THERE were once five and twenty tin soldiers; they were all brothers, for they had all been born of one old tin spoon. They shouldered their muskets, and looked straight before them: their uniform was red and blue, and very splendid. The first thing they had heard in the world, when the lid was taken off their box, had been the words 'Tin soldiers'! These words were uttered by a little boy, clapping his hands: the soldiers had been given to him, for it was his birthday; and now he put them upon the table. Each soldier was exactly like the rest only one of them was a little different, he had but one leg, for he had been cast last of all, and there had not been enough tin to finish him; but he stood as firmly upon his one leg as the others on their two; and it was just this soldier who became remarkable.

On the table on which they had been placed stood many other playthings, but the toy that attracted most attention

was a neat castle of cardboard. Through the little windows one could see straight into the hall. Before the castle some little trees were placed round a little looking-glass, which was to represent a clear lake. Waxen swans swam on this lake, and were mirrored in it. This was all very pretty ; but the prettiest of all was a little lady, who stood at the open door of the castle : she was also cut out in paper, but she had a dress of the clearest gauze, and a little narrow blue ribbon over her shoulders, that looked like a scarf ; and in the middle of this ribbon was a shining tinsel rose as big as her whole face. The little lady stretched out both her arms, for she was a dancer ; and then she lifted one leg so high that the tin soldier could not see it at all, and thought that, like himself, she had but one leg.

‘ That would be the wife for me,’ thought he ; ‘ but she is very grand. She lives in a castle, and I have only a box, and there are five and twenty of us in that. It is no place for her. But I must try to make acquaintance with her.’

And then he lay down at full length behind a snuff-box which was on the table ; there he could easily watch the little dainty lady, who continued to stand on one leg without losing her balance.

When the evening came, all the other tin soldiers were put into their box, and the people in the house went to bed. Now the toys began to play at ‘ visiting,’ and at ‘ war,’ and ‘ giving balls.’ The tin soldiers rattled in their box, for they wanted to join, but could not lift the lid. The nutcracker threw somersaults, and the pencil amused itself on the table : there was so much noise that the canary woke up, and began to speak too, and even in verse. The only two who did not stir from their places were the tin soldier and the dancing lady : she stood straight up on the point of one of her toes, and stretched out both her arms ; and he was just as enduring on his one leg ; and he never turned his eyes away from her.

Now the clock struck twelve—and, bounce !—the lid flew off the snuff-box ; but there was not snuff in it, but a little black goblin : you see it was a trick.

‘ Tin soldier ! ’ said the goblin, ‘ will you keep your eyes to yourself ? ’

But the tin soldier pretended not to hear him.

‘Just you wait till to-morrow!’ said the goblin.

But when the morning came, and the children got up, the tin soldier was placed in the window; and whether it was the goblin or the draught that did it, all at once the window flew open, and the soldier fell head over heels



out of the third story. That was a terrible passage! He put his leg straight up, and stuck with his helmet downwards and his bayonet between the paving-stones.

The servant-maid and the little boy came down directly to look for him, but though they almost trod upon him they could not see him. If the soldier had cried out ‘Here I am!’ they would have found him; but he did not think it fitting to call out loudly, because he was in uniform.

Now it began to rain ; the drops soon fell thicker, and at last it came down in a complete stream. When the rain was past, two street boys came by.

‘Just look !’ said one of them, ‘there lies a tin soldier. He shall go out sailing.’

And they made a boat out of a newspaper, and put the tin soldier in the middle of it ; and so he sailed down the gutter, and the two boys ran beside him and clapped their hands. Goodness preserve us ! how the waves rose in that gutter, and how fast the stream ran ! But then it had been a heavy rain. The paper boat rocked up and down, and sometimes turned round so rapidly that the tin soldier trembled ; but he remained firm, and never changed countenance, but looked straight before him, and shouldered his musket.

All at once the boat went into a long drain, and it became as dark as if he had been in his box.

‘Where am I going now ?’ he thought. ‘Yes, yes, that’s the goblin’s fault. Ah ! if the little lady only sat here with me in the boat, it might be twice as dark for what I should care.’

Suddenly there came a great water-rat, which lived under the drain.

‘Have you a passport ?’ said the rat. ‘Give me your passport.’

But the tin soldier kept silence, and held his musket tighter than ever.

The boat went on, but the rat came after it. Ugh ! how he gnashed his teeth, and called out to the bits of straw and wood,

‘Hold him ! hold him ! he hasn’t paid toll—he hasn’t shown his passport !’

But the stream became stronger and stronger. The tin soldier could see the bright daylight where the arch ended ; but he heard a roaring noise, which might well frighten a bolder man. Only think—just where the tunnel ended, the drain ran into a great canal ; and for him that would have been as dangerous as for us to be carried down a great waterfall.

Now he was already so near it that he could not stop. The boat was carried out, the poor tin soldier stiffening

himself as much as he could, and no one could say that he moved an eyelid. The boat whirled round three or four times, and was full of water to the very edge—it must sink. The tin soldier stood up to his neck in water, and the boat sank deeper and deeper, and the paper was loosened more and more ; and now the water closed over the soldier's head. Then he thought of the pretty little dancer, and how he should never see her again ; and it sounded in the soldier's ears :

Farewell, farewell, thou warrior brave,
For this day thou must die !

And now the paper parted, and the tin soldier fell out ; but at that moment he was snapped up by a great fish.

Oh, how dark it was in that fish's body ! It was darker yet than in the drain tunnel ; and then it was very narrow too. But the tin soldier remained unmoved, and lay at full length shouldering his musket.

The fish swam to and fro ; he made the most wonderful movements, and then became quite still. At last something flashed through him like lightning. The daylight shone quite clear, and a voice said aloud, 'The tin soldier !' The fish had been caught, carried to market, bought, and taken into the kitchen, where the cook cut him open with a large knife. She seized the soldier round the body with both her hands, and carried him into the room, where all were anxious to see the remarkable man who had travelled about in the inside of a fish ; but the tin soldier was not at all proud. They placed him on the table, and there—no ! What curious things may happen in the world ! The tin soldier was in the very room in which he had been before ! he saw the same children, and the same toys stood on the table ; and there was the pretty castle with the graceful little dancer. She was still balancing herself on one leg, and held the other extended in the air. She was hardy too. That moved the tin soldier : he was very nearly weeping tin tears, but that would not have been proper. He looked at her and she at him, but they said nothing to each other.

Then one of the little boys took the tin soldier and flung him into the stove. He gave no reason for doing this. It must have been the fault of the goblin in the snuff-box.

The tin soldier stood there quite illuminated, and felt a heat that was terrible ; but whether this heat proceeded from the real fire or from love he did not know. The colours had quite gone off from him ; but whether that had happened on the journey, or had been caused by grief, no one could say. He looked at the little lady, she looked at him, and he felt that he was melting ; but he still stood firm, shouldering his musket. Then suddenly the door flew open, and the draught of air caught the dancer, and she flew like a sylph just into the stove to the tin soldier, and flashed up in a flame, and she was gone. Then the tin soldier melted down into a lump, and when the servant-maid took the ashes out next day, she found him in the shape of a little tin heart. But of the dancer nothing remained but the tinsel rose, and that was burned as black as a coal.

THE WILD SWANS

FAR away, where the swallows fly when our winter comes on, lived a King who had eleven sons, and one daughter named Eliza. The eleven brothers were Princes, and each went to school with a star on his breast and his sword by his side. They wrote with pencils of diamond upon slates of gold, and learned by heart just as well as they read ; one could see directly that they were Princes. Their sister Eliza sat upon a little stool of plate glass, and had a picture-book which had been bought for the value of half a kingdom.

Oh, the children were particularly well off ; but it was not always to remain so.

Their father, who was King of the whole country, married a bad Queen who did not love the poor children at all. On the very first day they could notice this. In the whole palace there was great feasting, and the children were playing at receiving guests : but instead of these children receiving, as they had been accustomed to do, all the spare cake and all the roasted apples, they only had some sand given them in a tea-cup, and were told that they might make believe that was something good.

The next week the Queen took the little sister Eliza into

the country, to a peasant and his wife ; and but a short time had elapsed before she told the King so many falsehoods about the poor Princes that he did not trouble himself any more about them.

‘Fly out into the world and get your own living,’ said the wicked Queen. ‘Fly like great birds without a voice.’

But she could not make it so bad for them as she would have liked, for they became eleven magnificent wild swans. With a strange cry they flew out of the palace windows, far over the park and into the wood.

It was yet quite early morning when they came by the place where their sister Eliza lay asleep in the peasant’s room. Here they hovered over the roof, turned their long necks, and flapped their wings ; but no one heard or saw it. They were obliged to fly on, high up towards the clouds, far away into the wide world ; there they flew into a great dark wood, which stretched away to the sea shore.

Poor little Eliza stood in the peasant’s room and played with a green leaf, for she had no other playthings. And she pricked a hole in the leaf, and looked through it up at the sun, and it seemed to her that she saw her brothers’ clear eyes ; each time the warm sun shone upon her cheeks she thought of all the kisses they had given her.

Each day passed just like the rest. When the wind swept through the great rose hedges outside the house, it seemed to whisper to them, ‘What can be more beautiful than you ?’ But the roses shook their heads and answered, ‘Eliza !’ And when the old woman sat in front of her door on Sunday and read in her hymn-book, the wind turned the leaves and said to the book, ‘Who can be more pious than you ?’ and the hymn-book said, ‘Eliza !’ And what the rose bushes and the hymn-book said was the simple truth.

When she was fifteen years old she was to go home. And when the Queen saw how beautiful she was, she became spiteful and filled with hatred towards her. She would have been glad to change her into a wild swan, like her brothers, but she did not dare to do so at once, because the King wished to see his daughter.

Early in the morning the Queen went into the bath, which was built of white marble, and decked with soft

cushions and the most splendid tapestry ; and she took three toads and kissed them, and said to the first,

‘Sit upon Eliza’s head when she comes into the bath, that she may become as stupid as you.—Seat yourself upon her forehead,’ she said to the second, ‘that she may become as ugly as you, and her father may not know her.—Rest on her heart,’ she whispered to the third, ‘that she may receive an evil mind and suffer pain from it.’

Then she put the toads into the clear water, which at once assumed a green colour ; and calling Eliza, caused her to undress and step into the water. And while Eliza dived, one of the toads sat upon her hair, and the second on her forehead, and the third on her heart ; but she did not seem to notice it ; and as soon as she rose, three red poppies were floating on the water. If the creatures had not been poisonous, and if the witch had not kissed them, they would have been changed into red roses. But at any rate they became flowers, because they had rested on the girl’s head, and forehead, and heart. She was too good and innocent for sorcery to have power over her.

When the wicked Queen saw that, she rubbed Eliza with walnut juice, so that the girl became dark brown, and smeared an evil-smelling ointment on her face, and let her beautiful hair hang in confusion. It was quite impossible to recognize the pretty Eliza.

When her father saw her he was much shocked, and declared this was not his daughter. No one but the yard dog and the swallows would recognize her ; but they were poor animals who had nothing to say in the matter.

Then poor Eliza wept, and thought of her eleven brothers who were all away. Sorrowfully she crept out of the castle, and walked all day over field and moor till she came into the great wood. She did not know whither she wished to go, only she felt very downcast and longed for her brothers : they had certainly been, like herself, thrust forth into the world, and she would seek for them and find them.

She had been only a short time in the wood when the night fell ; she quite lost the path, therefore she lay down upon the soft moss, said her evening prayer, and leaned her head against the stump of a tree. Deep silence reigned

around, the air was mild, and in the grass and in the moss gleamed like a green fire hundreds of glow-worms ; when



she lightly touched one of the twigs with her hand, the shining insects fell down upon her like shooting stars.

The whole night long she dreamed of her brothers. They were children again playing together, writing with their

diamond pencils upon their golden slates, and looking at the beautiful picture-book which had cost half a kingdom. But on the slates they were not writing, as they had been accustomed to do, lines and letters, but the brave deeds they had done, and all they had seen and experienced ; and in the picture-book everything was alive—the birds sang, and the people went out of the book and spoke with Eliza and her brothers. But when the leaf was turned, they jumped back again directly, so that there should be no confusion.

When she awoke, the sun was already standing high. She could certainly not see it, for the lofty trees spread their branches far and wide above her. But the rays played above them like a gauzy veil, there was a fragrance from the fresh verdure, and the birds almost perched upon her shoulders. She heard the plashing of water ; it was from a number of springs all flowing into a lake which had the most delightful sandy bottom. It was surrounded by thick growing bushes, but at one part the stags had made a large opening, and here Eliza went down to the water. The lake was so clear, that if the wind had not stirred the branches and the bushes, so that they moved, one would have thought they were painted upon the depths of the lake, so clearly was every leaf mirrored, whether the sun shone upon it or whether it lay in shadow.

When Eliza saw her own face she was terrified—so brown and ugly was she ; but when she wetted her little hand and rubbed her eyes and her forehead, the white skin gleamed forth again. Then she undressed and went down into the fresh water : a more beautiful King's daughter than she was could not be found in the world. And when she had dressed herself again and plaited her long hair, she went to the bubbling spring, drank out of her hollow hand, and then wandered farther into the wood, not knowing whither she went. She thought of her dear brothers, and thought that Heaven would certainly not forsake her. It is God who lets the wild apples grow, to satisfy the hungry. He showed her a wild apple tree, with the boughs bending under the weight of the fruit. Here she took her midday meal, placed props under the boughs, and then went into the darkest part of the forest. There

it was so still that she could hear her own footsteps, as well as the rustling of every dry leaf which bent under her feet. Not one bird was to be seen, not one ray of sunlight could find its way through the great dark boughs of the trees ; the lofty trunks stood so close together that when she looked before her it appeared as though she were surrounded by sets of palings one behind the other. Oh, here was a solitude such as she had never before known !

The night came on quite dark. Not a single glow-worm now gleamed in the grass. Sorrowfully she lay down to sleep. Then it seemed to her as if the branches of the trees parted above her head, and mild eyes of angels looked down upon her from on high.

When the morning came, she did not know if it had really been so or if she had dreamed it.

She went a few steps forward, and then she met an old woman with berries in her basket, and the old woman gave her a few of them. Eliza asked the dame if she had not seen eleven Princes riding through the wood.

‘No,’ replied the old woman, ‘but yesterday I saw eleven swans swimming in the river close by, with golden crowns on their heads.’

And she led Eliza a short distance farther, to a declivity, and at the foot of the slope a little river wound its way. The trees on its margin stretched their long leafy branches across towards each other, and where their natural growth would not allow them to come together, the roots had been torn out of the ground, and hung, intermingled with the branches, over the water.

Eliza said farewell to the old woman, and went beside the river to the place where the stream flowed out to the great open ocean.

The whole glorious sea lay before the young girl’s eyes, but not one sail appeared on its surface, and not a boat was to be seen. How was she to proceed ? She looked at the innumerable little pebbles on the shore ; the water had worn them all round. Glass, ironstones, everything that was there had received its shape from the water, which was much softer than even her delicate hand.

‘It rolls on unweariedly, and thus what is hard becomes smooth. I will be just as unwearied. Thanks for your

lesson, you clear rolling waves ; my heart tells me that one day you will lead me to my dear brothers.'

On the foam-covered sea grass lay eleven white swan feathers, which she collected into a bunch. Drops of water were upon them—whether they were dew-drops or tears nobody could tell. Solitary it was there on the strand, but she did not feel it, for the sea showed continual changes—more in a few hours than the lovely lakes can produce in a whole year. Then a great black cloud came. It seemed as if the sea would say, 'I can look angry, too ;' and then the wind blew, and the waves turned their white side outward. But when the clouds gleamed red and the winds slept, the sea looked like a rose leaf ; sometimes it became green, sometimes white. But however quietly it might rest, there was still a slight motion on the shore ; the water rose gently like the breast of a sleeping child.

When the sun was just about to set, Eliza saw eleven wild swans, with crowns on their heads, flying towards the land : they swept along one after the other, so that they looked like a long white band. Then Eliza ascended the slope and hid herself behind a bush. The swans alighted near her and flapped their great white wings.

As soon as the sun had disappeared beneath the water, the swans' feathers fell off, and eleven handsome Princes, Eliza's brothers, stood there. She uttered a loud cry, for although they were greatly altered, she knew and felt that it must be they. And she sprang into their arms and called them by their names ; and the Princes felt supremely happy when they saw their little sister again ; and they knew her, though she was now tall and beautiful. They smiled and wept ; and soon they understood how cruel their stepmother had been to them all.

'We brothers,' said the eldest, 'fly about as wild swans as long as the sun is in the sky, but directly it sinks down we receive our human form again. Therefore we must always take care that we have a resting-place for our feet when the sun sets ; for if at that moment we were flying up towards the clouds, we should sink down into the deep as men. We do not dwell here : there lies a land just as fair as this beyond the sea. But the way thither is long ; we must cross the great sea, and on our path there

is no island where we could pass the night, only a little rock stands forth in the midst of the waves ; it is but just large enough that we can rest upon it close to each other. If the sea is rough, the foam spurts far over us, but we thank God for the rock. There we pass the night in our human form : but for this rock we could never visit our beloved native land, for we require two of the longest days in the year for our journey. Only once in each year is it granted to us to visit our home. For eleven days we may stay here and fly over the great wood, from whence we can see the palace in which we were born and in which our father lives, and the high church tower, beneath whose shade our mother lies buried. Here it seems to us as though the bushes and trees were our relatives ; here the wild horses career across the steppe, as we have seen them do in our childhood ; here the charcoal-burner sings the old songs to which we danced as children ; here is our fatherland : hither we feel ourselves drawn, and here we have found you, our dear little sister. Two days more we may stay here ; then we must away across the sea to a glorious land, but which is not our native land. How can we bear you away ? for we have neither ship nor boat.'

'In what way can I release you ?' asked the sister ; and they conversed nearly the whole night, only slumbering for a few hours.

She was awakened by the rustling of the swans' wings above her head. Her brothers were again enchanted, and they flew in wide circles and at last far away ; but one of them, the youngest, remained behind, and the swan laid his head in her lap, and she stroked his wings ; and the whole day they remained together. Towards evening the others came back, and when the sun had gone down they stood there in their own shapes.

'To-morrow we fly far away from here, and cannot come back until a whole year has gone by. But we cannot leave you thus ! Have you courage to come with us ? My arm is strong enough to carry you in the wood ; and should not all our wings be strong enough to fly with you over the sea ?'

'Yes, take me with you,' said Eliza.

The whole night they were occupied in weaving a net

of the pliable willow bark and tough reeds ; and it was great and strong. On this net Eliza lay down ; and when the sun rose, and her brothers were changed into wild swans, they seized the net with their beaks, and flew with their beloved sister, who was still asleep, high up towards the clouds. The sunbeams fell exactly upon her face, so one of the swans flew over her head, that his broad wings might overshadow her.

They were far away from the shore when Eliza awoke : she was still dreaming, so strange did it appear to her to be carried high through the air and over the sea. By her side lay a branch with beautiful ripe berries and a bundle of sweet-tasting roots. The youngest of the brothers had collected them and placed them there for her. She smiled at him thankfully, for she recognized him ; he it was who flew over her and shaded her with his wings.

They were so high that the first ship they descried beneath them seemed like a white seagull lying upon the waters. A great cloud stood behind them—it was a perfect mountain ; and upon it Eliza saw her own shadow and those of the eleven swans ; there they flew on, gigantic in size. Here was a picture, a more splendid one than she had ever yet seen. But as the sun rose higher and the cloud was left farther behind them, the floating shadowy images vanished away.

The whole day they flew onward through the air, like a whirring arrow, but their flight was slower than it was wont to be, for they had their sister to carry. Bad weather came on ; the evening drew near ; Eliza looked anxiously at the setting sun, for the lonely rock in the ocean could not be seen. It seemed to her as if the swans beat the air more strongly with their wings. Alas ! she was the cause that they did not advance fast enough. When the sun went down, they must become men and fall into the sea and drown. Then she prayed a prayer from the depths of her heart ; but still she could descry no rock. The dark clouds came nearer in a great black threatening body, rolling forward like a mass of lead, and the lightning burst forth, flash upon flash.

Now the sun just touched the margin of the sea. Eliza's heart trembled. Then the swans darted downwards, so

swiftly that she thought they were falling, but they paused again. The sun was half-hidden below the water. And now for the first time she saw the little rock beneath her, and it looked no larger than a seal might look, thrusting his head forth from the water. The sun sank very fast ; at last it appeared only like a star ; and then her foot touched the firm land. The sun was extinguished like the last spark in a piece of burned paper ; her brothers were standing around her, arm in arm, but there was not more than just enough room for her and for them. The sea beat against the rock and went over her like small rain ; the sky glowed in continual fire, and peal on peal the thunder rolled ; but sister and brothers held each other by the hand, and sang psalms, from which they gained comfort and courage.

In the morning twilight the air was pure and calm. As soon as the sun rose the swans flew away with Eliza from the island. The sea still ran high, and when they soared up aloft, the white foam looked like millions of white swans swimming upon the water.

When the sun mounted higher, Eliza saw before her, half-floating in the air, a mountainous country with shining masses of ice on its hills, and in the midst of it rose a castle, apparently a mile long, with row above row of elegant columns, while beneath waved the palm woods and bright flowers as large as mill-wheels. She asked if this was the country to which they were bound, but the swans shook their heads, for what she beheld was the gorgeous, ever-changing palace of Fata Morgana, and into this they might bring no human being. As Eliza gazed at it, mountains, woods, and castle fell down, and twenty proud churches, all nearly alike, with high towers and pointed windows, stood before them. She fancied she heard the organs sounding, but it was the sea she heard. When she was quite near the churches they changed to a fleet sailing beneath her, but when she looked down it was only a sea mist gliding over the ocean. Thus she had a continual change before her eyes, till at last she saw the real land to which they were bound. There arose the most glorious blue mountains, with cedar forests, cities, and palaces. Long before the sun went down she sat on the rock, in

front of a great cave overgrown with delicate green trailing plants looking like embroidered carpets.

‘Now we shall see what you will dream of here to-night,’ said the youngest brother; and he showed her to her bed-chamber.

‘Heaven grant that I may dream of a way to release you,’ she replied.

And this thought possessed her mightily, and she prayed ardently for help; yes, even in her sleep she continued to pray. Then it seemed to her as if she were flying high in the air to the cloudy palace of Fata Morgana; and the fairy came out to meet her, beautiful and radiant; and yet the fairy was quite like the old woman who had given her the berries in the wood, and had told her of the swans with golden crowns on their heads.

‘Your brothers can be released,’ said she. ‘But have you courage and perseverance? Certainly, water is softer than your delicate hands, and yet it changes the shape of stones; but it feels not the pain that your fingers will feel; it has no heart, and does not suffer the agony and torment you will have to endure. Do you see the stinging-nettle which I hold in my hand? Many of the same kind grow around the cave in which you sleep: those only, and those that grow upon churchyard graves, are serviceable, remember that. Those you must pluck, though they will burn your hands into blisters. Break these nettles to pieces with your feet, and you will have flax; of this you must plait and weave eleven shirts of mail with long sleeves: throw these over the eleven swans, and the charm will be broken. But recollect well, from the moment you begin this work until it is finished, even though it should take years to accomplish, you must not speak. The first word you utter will pierce your brothers’ hearts like a deadly dagger. Their lives hang on your tongue. Remember all this!’

And she touched her hand with the nettle; it was like a burning fire, and Eliza woke with the smart. It was broad daylight; and close by the spot where she had slept lay a nettle like the one she had seen in her dream. She fell upon her knees and prayed gratefully, and went forth from the cave to begin her work.

With her delicate hands she groped among the ugly nettles. These stung like fire, burning great blisters on her arms and hands ; but she thought she would bear it gladly if she could only release her dear brothers. Then she bruised every nettle with her bare feet and plaited the green flax.

When the sun had set her brothers came, and they were frightened when they found her dumb. They thought it was some new sorcery of their wicked stepmother's ; but when they saw her hands, they understood what she was doing for their sake, and the youngest brother wept. And where his tears dropped she felt no more pain, and the burning blisters vanished.

She passed the night at her work, for she could not sleep till she had delivered her dear brothers. The whole of the following day, while the swans were away, she sat in solitude, but never had time flown so quickly with her as now. One shirt of mail was already finished, and now she began the second.

Then a hunting horn sounded among the hills, and she was struck with fear. The noise came nearer and nearer ; she heard the barking dogs, and timidly she fled into the cave, bound into a bundle the nettles she had collected and prepared, and sat upon the bundle.

Immediately a great dog came bounding out of the thicket, and then another, and another : they barked loudly, ran back, and then came again. Only a few minutes had gone before all the huntsmen stood before the cave, and the handsomest of them was the King of the country. He came forward to Eliza, for he had never seen a more beautiful maiden.

‘How did you come hither, you delightful child ?’ he asked.

Eliza shook her head, for she might not speak—it would cost her brothers their deliverance and their lives. And she hid her hands under her apron, so that the King might not see what she was suffering.

‘Come with me,’ said he. ‘You cannot stop here. If you are as good as you are beautiful, I will dress you in velvet and silk, and place the golden crown on your head, and you shall dwell in my richest castle, and rule.’

And then he lifted her on his horse. She wept and wrung her hands ; but the King said,

‘ I only wish for your happiness : one day you will thank me for this.’

And then he galloped away among the mountains with her on his horse, and the hunters galloped at their heels.

When the sun went down, the fair regal city lay before them, with its churches and cupolas ; and the King led her into the castle, where great fountains plashed in the lofty marble halls, and where walls and ceilings were covered with glorious pictures. But she had no eyes for all this—she only wept and mourned. Passively she let the women put royal robes upon her, and weave pearls in her hair, and draw dainty gloves over her blistered fingers.

When she stood there in full array, she was dazzlingly beautiful, so that the Court bowed deeper than ever. And the King chose her for his bride, although the archbishop shook his head and whispered that the beauteous forest maid was certainly a witch, who blinded the eyes and led astray the heart of the King.

But the King gave no ear to this, but ordered that the music should sound, and the costliest dishes should be served, and the most beautiful maidens should dance before them. And she was led through fragrant gardens into gorgeous halls ; but never a smile came upon her lips or shone in her eyes : there she stood, a picture of grief. Then the King opened a little chamber close by, where she was to sleep. This chamber was decked with splendid green tapestry, and completely resembled the cave in which she had been. On the floor lay the bundle of flax which she had prepared from the nettles, and under the ceiling hung the shirt of mail she had completed. All these things one of the huntsmen had brought with him as curiosities.

‘ Here you may dream yourself back in your former home,’ said the King. ‘ Here is the work which occupied you there, and now, in the midst of all your splendour, it will amuse you to think of that time.’

When Eliza saw this that lay so near her heart, a smile played round her mouth and the crimson blood came back into her cheeks. She thought of her brothers’ deliverance, and kissed the King’s hand ; and he pressed her to his

heart, and caused the marriage feast to be announced by all the church bells. The beautiful dumb girl out of the wood became the Queen of the country.

Then the archbishop whispered evil words into the King's ear, but they did not sink into the King's heart. The marriage was to take place ; the archbishop himself was obliged to place the crown on her head, and with wicked spite he pressed the narrow circlet so tightly upon her brow that it pained her. But a heavier ring lay close around her heart—sorrow for her brothers ; she did not feel the bodily pain. Her mouth was dumb, for a single word would cost her brothers their lives, but her eyes glowed with love for the kind, handsome King, who did everything to rejoice her. She loved him with her whole heart, more and more every day. Oh that she had been able to confide in him and to tell him of her grief ! But she was compelled to be dumb, and to finish her work in silence. Therefore at night she crept away from his side, and went quietly into the little chamber which was decorated like the cave, and wove one shirt of mail after another. But when she began the seventh she had no flax left.

She knew that in the churchyard nettles were growing that she could use ; but she must pluck them herself, and how was she to go out there ?

‘ Oh, what is the pain in my fingers to the torment my heart endures ? ’ thought she. ‘ I must venture it, and help will not be denied me ! ’

With a trembling heart, as though the deed she purposed doing had been evil, she crept into the garden in the moonlight night, and went through the long avenues and through the deserted streets to the churchyard. There, on one of the broadest tombstones, she saw sitting a circle of lamias. These hideous wretches took off their ragged garments, as if they were going to bathe ; then with their skinny fingers they clawed open the fresh graves, and with fiendish greed they snatched up the corpses and ate the flesh. Eliza was obliged to pass close by them, and they fastened their evil glances upon her ; but she prayed silently, and collected the burning nettles, and carried them into the castle.

Only one person had seen her, and that was the arch-

bishop. He was awake while others slept. Now he felt sure his opinion was correct, that all was not as it should be with the Queen ; she was a witch, and thus she had bewitched the King and the whole people.

In secret he told the King what he had seen and what he feared ; and when the hard words came from his tongue, the pictures of saints in the cathedral shook their heads, as though they could have said, ' It is not so ! Eliza is innocent ! ' But the archbishop interpreted this differently—he thought they were bearing witness against her, and shaking their heads at her sinfulness. Then two heavy tears rolled down the King's cheeks ; he went home with doubt in his heart, and at night pretended to be asleep ; but no quiet sleep came upon his eyes, for he noticed that Eliza got up. Every night she did this, and each time he followed her silently, and saw how she disappeared from her chamber.

From day to day his face became darker. Eliza saw it, but did not understand the reason ; but it frightened her—and what did she not suffer in her heart for her brothers ? Her hot tears flowed upon the royal velvet and purple ; they lay there like sparkling diamonds, and all who saw the splendour wished they were Queens. In the meantime she had almost finished her work. Only one shirt of mail was still to be completed, but she had no flax left, and not a single nettle. Once more, for the last time, therefore, she must go to the churchyard, only to pluck a few handfuls. She thought with terror of this solitary wandering and of the horrible lamias, but her will was firm as her trust in Providence.

Eliza went on, but the King and the archbishop followed her. They saw her vanish into the churchyard through the wicket gate ; and when they drew near, the lamias were sitting upon the gravestones as Eliza had seen them ; and the King turned aside, for he fancied her among them, whose head had rested against his breast that very evening.

' The people must judge her,' said he.

And the people condemned her to suffer death by fire.

Out of the gorgeous regal halls she was led into a dark damp cell, where the wind whistled through the grated window ; instead of velvet and silk they gave her the

bundle of nettles which she had collected : on this she could lay her head ; and the hard burning coats of mail which she had woven were to be her coverlet. But nothing could have been given her that she liked better. She resumed her work and prayed. Without, the street boys were singing jeering songs about her, and not a soul comforted her with a kind word.

But towards evening there came the whirring of swans' wings close by the grating—it was the youngest of her brothers. He had found his sister, and she sobbed aloud with joy, though she knew that the approaching night would probably be the last she had to live. But now the work was almost finished, and her brothers were here.

Now came the archbishop, to stay with her in her last hour, for he had promised the King to do so. But she shook her head, and with looks and gestures she begged him to depart, for in this night she must finish her work, or else all would be in vain, all her tears, her pain, and her sleepless nights. The archbishop withdrew uttering evil words against her ; but poor Eliza knew she was innocent, and continued her work.

The little mice ran about on the floor, and dragged nettles to her feet in order to help her ; and the thrush perched beside the bars of the window and sang all night as merrily as it could, so that she might not lose heart.

It was still twilight ; not till an hour afterwards would the sun rise. And the eleven brothers stood at the castle gate, and demanded to be brought before the King. That could not be, they were told, for it was still almost night ; the King was asleep, and might not be disturbed. They begged, they threatened, and the sentries came, yes, even the King himself came out, and asked what was the meaning of this. At that moment the sun rose, and no more were the brothers to be seen, but eleven wild swans flew away over the castle.

All the people came flocking out at the town gate, for they wanted to see the witch burned. An old horse drew the cart on which she sat. They had put upon her a garment of coarse sackcloth. Her lovely hair hung loose about her beautiful head ; her cheeks were as pale as death ; and her lips moved silently, while her fingers were

engaged with the green flax. Even on the way to death she did not interrupt the work she had begun ; the ten shirts of mail lay at her feet, and she wrought at the eleventh. The mob derided her.

‘ Look at the witch, how she mutters ! She has no hymn-book in her hand ; no, there she sits with her ugly sorcery—tear it in a thousand pieces ! ’

And they all pressed upon her, and wanted to tear up the shirts of mail. Then eleven wild swans came flying up, and sat round about her on the cart, and beat with their wings ; and the mob gave way before them, terrified.

‘ That is a sign from heaven ! She is certainly innocent ! ’ whispered many. But they did not dare to say it aloud.

Now the executioner seized her by the hand ; then she hastily threw the eleven shirts over the swans, and immediately eleven handsome Princes stood there. But the youngest had a swan’s wing instead of an arm, for a sleeve was wanting to his shirt—she had not quite finished it.

‘ Now I may speak ! ’ she said. ‘ I am innocent ! ’

And the people who saw what happened bowed before her as before a saint ; but she sank lifeless into her brothers’ arms, such an effect had suspense, anguish, and pain had upon her.

‘ Yes, she is innocent,’ said the eldest brother.

And now he told everything that had taken place ; and while he spoke a fragrance arose as of millions of roses, for every piece of faggot in the pile had taken root and was sending forth shoots ; and a fragrant hedge stood there, tall and great, covered with red roses, and at the top a flower, white and shining, gleaming like a star. This flower the King plucked and placed in Eliza’s bosom ; and she awoke with peace and happiness in her heart.

And all the church bells rang of themselves, and the birds came in great flocks. And back to the castle such a marriage procession took place as no King had ever seen.

THE GARDEN OF PARADISE

THERE was once a King's son; no one had so many beautiful books as he : everything that had happened in this world he could read there, and could see represented in lovely pictures. Of every people and of every land he could get intelligence ; but there was not a word to tell where the Garden of Paradise could be found, and it was just that of which he thought most.

His grandmother had told him, when he was quite little but was about to begin his schooling, that every flower in this Garden of Paradise was a delicate cake, and the pistils contained the choicest wine ; on one of the flowers history was written, and on another geography or tables, so that one had only to eat cake, and one knew a lesson ; and the more one ate, the more history, geography, or tables did one learn.

At that time he believed this. But when he became a bigger boy, and learned more and became wiser, he understood well that the splendour in the Garden of Paradise must be of quite a different kind.

' Oh, why did Eve pluck from the Tree of Knowledge ? Why did Adam eat the forbidden fruit ? If I had been he it would never have happened—then sin would never have come into the world.'

That he said then, and he still said it when he was seventeen years old. The Garden of Paradise filled all his thoughts.

One day he walked in the wood. He was walking quite alone, for that was his greatest pleasure. The evening came, and the clouds gathered together ; rain streamed down as if the sky were one single sluice from which the water was pouring ; it was as dark as it usually is at night in the deepest well. Often he slipped on the smooth grass, often he fell over the smooth stones which stuck up out of the wet rocky ground. Everything was soaked with water, and there was not a dry thread on the poor Prince. He was obliged to climb over great blocks of stone, where the water oozed from the thick moss. He was nearly

fainting. Then he heard a strange rushing, and saw before him a great illuminated cave. In the midst of it burned a fire, so large that a stag might have been roasted at it. And this was in fact being done. A glorious deer had been stuck, horns and all, upon a spit, and was turning slowly between two felled pine trunks. An elderly woman, large and strongly built, looking like a disguised man, sat by the fire, into which she threw one piece of wood after another.

‘Come nearer!’ said she. ‘Sit down by the fire and dry your clothes.’

‘There’s a great draught here!’ said the Prince; and he sat down on the ground.

‘That will be worse when my sons come home,’ replied the woman. ‘You are here in the Cavern of the Winds, and my sons are the four winds of the world: can you understand that?’

‘Where are your sons?’ asked the Prince.

‘It’s difficult to answer when stupid questions are asked,’ said the woman. ‘My sons do business on their own account. They play at shuttlecock with the clouds up yonder in the great hall.’

And she pointed upwards.

‘Oh, indeed!’ said the Prince. ‘But you speak rather gruffly, by the way, and are not so mild as the women I generally see about me.’

‘Yes, they have most likely nothing else to do! I must be hard, if I want to keep my sons in order; but I can do it, though they are obstinate fellows. Do you see the four sacks hanging there by the wall? They are just as frightened of those as you used to be of the rod stuck behind the mirror. I can bend the lads together, I tell you, and then I pop them into the bag: we don’t make any ceremony. There they sit, and may not wander about again until I think fit to allow them. But here comes one of them!’

It was the North Wind, who rushed in with piercing cold; great hailstones skipped about on the floor, and snowflakes fluttered about. He was dressed in a jacket and trousers of bear-skin; a cap of seal-skin was drawn down over his ears; long icicles hung on his beard, and one hailstone after another rolled from the collar of his jacket.

‘Do not go so near the fire directly,’ said the Prince, ‘you might get your hands and face frost-bitten.’

‘Frost-bitten?’ repeated the North Wind, and he laughed aloud. ‘Cold is exactly what rejoices me most! But what kind of little tailor art thou? How did you find your way into the Cavern of the Winds?’

‘He is my guest,’ interposed the old woman, ‘and if you’re not satisfied with this explanation you may go into the sack: do you understand me?’

You see, that was the right way; and now the North Wind told whence he came and where he had been for almost a month.

‘I come from the Polar Sea,’ said he; ‘I have been in the bear’s icy land with the Russian walrus hunters. I sat and slept on the helm when they sailed out from the North Cape, and when I awoke now and then, the storm-bird flew round my legs. That’s a comical bird! He gives a sharp clap with his wings, and then holds them quite still and shoots along in full career.’

‘Don’t be too long-winded,’ said the mother of the Winds. ‘And so you came to the Bear’s Island?’

‘It is very beautiful there! There’s a floor for dancing on, as flat as a plate. Half-thawed snow, with a little moss, sharp stones, and skeletons of walruses and polar bears lay around, they looked like gigantic arms and legs of a rusty green colour. One would have thought the sun had never shone there. I blew a little upon the mist, so that one could see the hut: it was a house built of wreck-wood and covered with walrus-skins—the fleshy side turned outwards. It was full of green and red, and on the roof sat a live polar bear who was growling. I went to the shore to look after birds’ nests, and saw the unfledged nestlings screaming and opening their beaks; then I blew down into their thousand throats, and taught them to shut their mouths. Farther on the huge walruses were splashing like great maggots with pigs’ heads and teeth an ell long!’

‘You tell your story well, my son,’ said the old lady. ‘My mouth waters when I hear you!’

‘Then the hunting began! The harpoon was hurled into the walrus’s breast, so that a smoking stream of blood spurted like a fountain over the ice. When I thought of

my sport, I blew, and let my sailing ships, the big icebergs, crush the boats between them. Oh, how the people whistled, and how they cried ! but I whistled louder than they. They were obliged to throw the dead walruses and their chests and tackle out upon the ice. I shook the snowflakes over them, and let them drive south in their crushed boats with their booty to taste salt water. They'll never come to Bear's Island again !'

'Then you have done a wicked thing !' said the mother of the Winds.

'What good I have done others may tell,' replied he. 'But here comes a brother from the west. I like him best of all : he tastes of the sea and brings a delicious coolness with him.'

'Is that little Zephyr ?' asked the Prince.

'Yes, certainly, that is Zephyr,' replied the old woman. 'But he is not little. Years ago he was a pretty boy, but that's past now.'

He looked like a wild man, but he had a broad-brimmed hat on, to save his face. In his hand he held a club of mahogany, hewn in the American mahogany forests. It was no trifle.

'Where do you come from ?' said his mother.

'Out of the forest wilderness,' said he, 'where the thorny creepers make a fence between every tree, where the water-snake lies in the wet grass, and people don't seem to be wanted.'

'What were you doing there ?'

'I looked into the deepest river, and watched how it rushed down from the rocks, and turned to spray, and shot up towards the clouds to carry the rainbow. I saw the wild buffalo swimming in the stream, but the stream carried him away. He drifted with the flock of wild ducks that flew up where the water fell down in a cataract. The buffalo had to go down it ! That pleased me, and I blew a storm, so that ancient trees were split up into splinters !'

'And have you done nothing else ?' asked the old dame.

'I have thrown somersaults in the Savannahs : I have stroked the wild horses and shaken the coco-nut palms. Yes, yes, I have stories to tell ! But one must not tell all one knows. You know that, old lady.'

And he kissed his mother so roughly that she almost tumbled over. He was a terribly wild young fellow !

Now came the South Wind, with a turban on and a flying Bedouin's cloak.

'It's terribly cold in here !' cried he, and threw some more wood on the fire. 'One can feel that the North Wind came first.'

'It's so hot that one could roast a Polar bear here,' said the North Wind.

'You're a Polar bear yourself,' retorted the South Wind.

'Do you want to be put in the sack ?' asked the old dame. 'Sit upon the stone yonder and tell me where you have been.'

'In Africa, mother,' he answered. 'I was out hunting the lion with the Hottentots in the land of the Kaffirs. Grass grows there in the plains, green as an olive. There the ostrich ran races with me, but I am swifter than he. I came into the desert where the yellow sand lies : it looks there like the bottom of the sea. I met a caravan. The people were killing their last camel to get water to drink, but it was very little they got. The sun burned above and the sand below. The outspread deserts had no bounds. Then I rolled in the fine loose sand, and whirled it up in great pillars. That was a dance ! You should have seen how dejected the dromedary stood there, and the merchant drew the caftan over his head. He threw himself down before me, as before Allah, his God. Now they are buried—a pyramid of sand covers them all. When I some day blow that away, the sun will bleach the white bones ; then travellers may see that men have been there before them. Otherwise, one would not believe that, in the desert !'

'So you have done nothing but evil !' exclaimed the mother. 'March into the sack !'

And before he was aware, she had seized the South Wind round the body, and popped him into the bag. He rolled about on the floor ; but she sat down on the sack, and then he had to keep quiet.

'Those are lively boys of yours,' said the Prince.

'Yes,' she replied, 'and I know how to punish them ! Here comes the fourth !'

That was the East Wind, who came dressed like a Chinaman.

‘Oh! do you come from that region?’ said his mother. ‘I thought you had been in the Garden of Paradise.’

‘I don’t fly there till to-morrow,’ said the East Wind. ‘It will be a hundred years to-morrow since I was there. I come from China now, where I danced around the porcelain tower till all the bells jingled again! In the streets the officials were being thrashed: the bamboos were broken upon their shoulders, yet they were high people, from the first to the ninth grade. They cried, “Many thanks, my paternal benefactor!” but it didn’t come from their hearts. And I rang the bells and sang, “Tsing, tsang, tsu!”’

‘You are foolish,’ said the old dame. ‘It is a good thing that you are going into the Garden of Paradise to-morrow: that always helps on your education. Drink bravely out of the spring of Wisdom, and bring home a little bottle-full for me.’

‘That I will do,’ said the East Wind. ‘But why have you clapped my brother South in the bag? Out with him! He shall tell me about the Phoenix bird, for about that bird the Princess in the Garden of Paradise always wants to hear, when I pay my visit every hundredth year. Open the sack, then you shall be my sweetest of mothers, and I will give you two pocketfuls of tea, green and fresh as I plucked it at the place where it grew!’

‘Well, for the sake of the tea, and because you are my darling boy, I will open the sack.’

She did so, and the South Wind crept out; but he looked quite downcast, because the strange Prince had seen his disgrace.

‘There you have a palm leaf for the Princess,’ said the South Wind. ‘This palm leaf was given me by the Phoenix bird, the only one now in the world. With his beak he has scratched upon it a description of all the hundred years he has lived. Now she may read it all herself. I saw how the Phoenix bird set fire to her nest, and sat upon it, and was burned to death like a Hindoo’s widow. How the dry branches crackled! What a smoke and a perfume there was! At last everything burst into flame, and the

old Phoenix turned to ashes, but her egg lay red-hot in the fire ; it burst with a great bang, and the young one flew out. Now this young one is ruler over all the birds, and the only Phoenix in the world. It has bitten a hole in the palm leaf I have given you : that is a greeting to the Princess.'

'Let us have something to eat,' said the mother of the Winds.

And now they all sat down to eat of the roasted deer. The Prince sat beside the East Wind, and they soon became good friends.

'Just tell me,' said the Prince, 'what Princess is that about whom there is so much talk here ? and where does the Garden of Paradise lie ?'

'Ho, ho !' said the East Wind, 'do you want to go there ? Well, then, fly to-morrow with me ! But I must tell you, however, that no man has been there since the time of Adam and Eve. You have read of them in your Bible history ?'

'Yes,' said the Prince.

'When they were driven away, the Garden of Paradise sank into the earth ; but it kept its warm sunshine, its mild air, and all its splendour. The Queen of the Fairies lives there, and there lies the Island of Happiness, where death never comes, and where it is beautiful. Sit upon my back to-morrow, and I will take you with me : I think it can very well be done. But now leave off talking, for I want to sleep.'

And then they all went to rest.

In the early morning the Prince awoke, and was not a little astonished to find himself high above the clouds. He was sitting on the back of the East Wind, who was faithfully holding him : they were so high in the air, that the woods and fields, rivers and lakes, looked as if they were painted on a map below them.

'Good morning !' said the East Wind. 'You might very well sleep a little longer, for there is not much to be seen on the flat country under us, unless you care to count the churches. They stand like dots of chalk on the green carpet.'

What he called green carpet was field and meadow.

‘It was rude of me not to say good-bye to your mother and your brothers,’ said the Prince.

‘When one is asleep one must be excused,’ replied the East Wind.

And then they flew on faster than ever. One could hear it in the tops of the trees, for when they passed over them the leaves and twigs rustled; one could hear it on the sea and on the lakes, for when they flew by the water rose higher, and the great ships bowed themselves towards the water like swimming swans.

Towards evening, when it became dark, the great towns looked charming, for lights were burning below, here and there; it was just as when one has lighted a piece of paper, and sees all the little sparks that vanish one after another. And the Prince clapped his hands; but the East Wind begged him not to do so, and rather to hold fast, otherwise he might easily fall down and get caught on a church spire.

The eagle in the dark woods flew easily, but the East Wind flew more easily still. The Cossack on his little horse skimmed swiftly over the steppes, but the Prince skimmed more swiftly still.

‘Now you can see the Himalayas,’ said the East Wind. ‘That is the highest mountain range in Asia. Now we shall soon get to the Garden of Paradise.’

Then they turned more to the south, and soon the air was fragrant with flowers and spices; figs and pomegranates grew wild, and the wild vine bore clusters of red and purple grapes. Here both alighted and stretched themselves on the soft grass, where the flowers nodded to the wind, as though they would have said ‘Welcome!’

‘Are we now in the Garden of Paradise?’ asked the Prince.

‘Not at all,’ replied the East Wind. ‘But we shall soon get there. Do you see the rocky wall yonder, and the great cave, where the vines cluster like a broad green curtain? Through that we shall pass. Wrap yourself in your cloak. Here the sun scorches you, but a step farther it will be icy cold. The bird which hovers past the cave has one wing in the region of summer and the other in the wintry cold.’

‘So this is the way to the Garden of Paradise?’ observed the Prince.

They went into the cave. Ugh! but it was icy cold there, but this did not last long. The East Wind spread out his wings, and they gleamed like the brightest fire. What a cave was that! Great blocks of stone, from which the water dripped down, hung over them in the strangest shapes; sometimes it was so narrow that they had to creep on their hands and knees, sometimes as lofty and broad as in the open air. The place looked like a number of mortuary chapels, with dumb organ pipes, and petrified banners.

‘We are going through the way of death to the Garden of Paradise, are we not?’ inquired the Prince.

The East Wind answered not a syllable, but he pointed forward to where a lovely blue light gleamed upon them. The stone blocks over their heads became more and more like a mist, and at last looked like a white cloud in the moonlight. Now they were in a deliciously mild air, fresh as on the hills, fragrant as among the roses of the valley. There ran a river, clear as the air itself, and the fishes were like silver and gold; purple eels, flashing out blue sparks at every moment, played in the water below; and the broad water-plant leaves shone in the colours of the rainbow; the flower itself was an orange-coloured burning flame, to which the water gave nourishment, as the oil to the burning lamp; a bridge of marble, strong, indeed, but so lightly built that it looked as if made of lace and glass beads, led them across the water to the Island of Happiness, where the Garden of Paradise bloomed.

The East Wind took the Prince in his arms and carried him over there. There flowers and leaves sang the loveliest songs from his childhood, but with such swelling music as no human voice can utter.

Were they palm trees that grew here, or gigantic water-plants? Such verdant mighty trees the Prince had never beheld; the most wonderful climbing plants hung there in long festoons, as one only sees them illuminated in gold and colours on the margins of old missal-books or twined among the initial letters. Here were the strangest groupings of birds, flowers, and twining lines. Close by, in the grass,

stood a flock of peacocks with their shining starry trains outspread.

Yes, it was really so ! But when the Prince touched these, he found they were not birds, but plants ; they were great burdocks, which shone like the peacock's gorgeous train. The lion and the tiger sprang to and fro like agile cats among the green bushes, which were fragrant as the blossom of the olive tree ; and the lion and the tiger were tame. The wild wood pigeon shone like the most beautiful pearl, and beat her wings against the lion's mane ; and



the antelope, usually so timid, stood by nodding its head, as if it wished to play too.

Now came the Fairy of Paradise. Her garb shone like the sun, and her countenance was cheerful like that of a happy mother when she is well pleased with her child. She was young and beautiful, and was followed by a number of pretty maidens, each with a gleaming star in her hair. The East Wind gave her the written leaf from the Phoenix bird, and her eyes shone with pleasure.

She took the Prince by the hand and led him into her palace, where the walls had the colour of a splendid tulip leaf when it is held up in the sunlight. The ceiling was a great sparkling flower, and the more one looked up at

it, the deeper did its cup appear. The Prince stepped to the window and looked through one of the panes. Here he saw the Tree of Knowledge, with the serpent, and Adam and Eve were standing close by.

‘Were they not driven out?’ he asked.

And the Fairy smiled, and explained to him that Time had burned in the picture upon that pane, but not as people are accustomed to see pictures. No, there was life in it: the leaves of the trees moved; men came and went as in a dissolving view. And he looked through another pane, and there was Jacob’s dream, with the ladder reaching up into heaven, and the angels with great wings were ascending and descending. Yes, everything that had happened in the world lived and moved in the glass panes; such cunning pictures only Time could burn in.

The Fairy smiled, and led him into a great lofty hall, whose walls appeared transparent. Here were portraits, and each face looked fairer than the last. There were to be seen millions of happy ones who smiled and sang, so that it flowed together into a melody; the uppermost were so small that they looked like the smallest rosebud, when it is drawn as a point upon paper. And in the midst of the hall stood a great tree with rich pendent boughs; golden apples, great and small, hung like oranges among the leaves. That was the Tree of Knowledge, of whose fruit Adam and Eve had eaten. From each leaf fell a shining red dew-drop; it was as though the tree wept tears of blood.

‘Let us now get into the boat,’ said the Fairy, ‘then we will enjoy some refreshment on the heaving waters. The boat rocks, yet does not quit its station; but all the lands of the earth will glide past in our sight.’

And it was wonderful to behold how the whole coast moved. There came the lofty snow-covered Alps, with clouds and black pine trees; the horn sounded with its melancholy note, and the shepherd trolled his merry song in the valley. Then the banana trees bent their long hanging branches over the boat; coal-black swans swam on the water, and the strangest animals and flowers showed themselves upon the shore. That was New Holland, the fifth great division of the world, which glided past with a

background of blue hills. They heard the song of the priests, and saw the savages dancing to the sound of drums and of bone trumpets. Egypt's pyramids, towering aloft to the clouds, overturned pillars and sphinxes, half buried in the sand, sailed past likewise. The Northern Lights shone over the glaciers of the north—it was a firework that no one could imitate. The Prince was quite happy, and he saw a hundred times more than we can relate here.

‘And can I always stay here?’ asked he.

‘That depends upon yourself,’ answered the Fairy. ‘If you do not, like Adam, yield to the temptation to do what is forbidden, you may always remain here.’

‘I shall not touch the apples on the Tree of Knowledge!’ said the Prince. ‘Here are thousands of fruits just as beautiful as those.’

‘Search your own heart, and if you are not strong enough, go away with the East Wind that brought you hither. He is going to fly back, and will not show himself here again for a hundred years: the time will pass for you in this place as if it were a hundred hours, but it is a long time for the temptation of sin. Every evening, when I leave you, I shall have to call to you, “Come with me!” and I shall have to beckon to you with my hand; but stay where you are: do not go with me, or your longing will become greater with every step. You will then come into the hall where the Tree of Knowledge grows; I sleep under its fragrant pendent boughs; you will bend over me, and I must smile; but if you press a kiss upon my mouth, the Paradise will sink deep into the earth and be lost to you. The keen wind of the desert will rush around you, the cold rain drop from your hair, and sorrow and woe will be your portion.’

‘I shall stay here!’ said the Prince.

And the East Wind kissed him on the forehead, and said, ‘Be strong, and we shall meet here again in a hundred years. Farewell! farewell!’

And the East Wind spread out his broad wings, and they flashed like sheet lightning in harvest-time, or like the Northern Lights in the cold winter.

‘Farewell! farewell!’ sounded from among the flowers and the trees. Storks and pelicans flew away in rows like

fluttering ribbons, and bore him company to the boundary of the garden.

‘Now we will begin our dances!’ cried the Fairy. ‘At the end, when I dance with you, when the sun goes down, you will see me beckon to you; you will hear me call to you, “Come with me;” but do not obey. For a hundred years I must repeat this every evening; every time, when the trial is past, you will gain more strength; at last you will not think of it at all. This evening is the first time. Now I have warned you.’

And the Fairy led him into a great hall of white transparent lilies; the yellow stamens in each flower formed a little golden harp, which sounded both like a stringed instrument and a flute. The most beautiful maidens, floating and slender, clad in gauzy mist, glided by in the dance, and sang of the happiness of living, and declared that they would never die, and that the Garden of Paradise would bloom for ever.

And the sun went down. The whole sky shone like gold, which gave to the lilies the hue of the most glorious roses; and the Prince drank of the foaming wine which the maidens poured out for him, and felt a happiness he had never before known. He saw how the background of the hall opened, and the Tree of Knowledge stood in a glory which blinded his eyes; the singing there was soft and lovely as the voice of his dear mother, and it was as though she sang, ‘My child! my beloved child!’

Then the Fairy beckoned to him, and called out persuasively,

‘Come with me! come with me!’

And he rushed towards her, forgetting his promise, forgetting it the very first evening; and still she beckoned and smiled. The fragrance, the delicious fragrance around became stronger, the harps sounded far more lovely, and it seemed as though the millions of smiling heads in the hall, where the tree grew, nodded and sang, ‘One must know everything—man is the lord of the earth.’ And they were no longer drops of blood that the Tree of Knowledge wept; they were red shining stars which he seemed to see.

‘Come! come!’ the quivering voice still cried, and at

every step the Prince's cheeks burned more hotly and his blood flowed more rapidly.

'I must!' said he. 'It is no sin, it cannot be one. Why not follow beauty and joy? I only want to see her asleep; there will be nothing lost if I only refrain from kissing her; and I will not kiss her: I am strong and have a resolute will!'

And the Fairy threw off her shining cloak and bent back the branches, and in another moment she was hidden among them.

'I have not yet sinned,' said the Prince, 'and I will not.'

And he pushed the boughs aside. There she slept already, beautiful as only a fairy in the Garden of Paradise can be. She smiled in her dreams, and he bent over her, and saw tears quivering beneath her eyelids!

'Do you weep for me?' he whispered. 'Weep not, thou glorious woman! Now only I understand the bliss of Paradise! It streams through my blood, through my thoughts; the power of the angel and of increasing life I feel in my mortal body! Let what will happen to me now; one moment like this is wealth enough!'

And he kissed the tears from her eyes—his mouth touched hers.

Then there resounded a clap of thunder so loud and dreadful that no one had ever heard the like, and everything fell down; and the beautiful Fairy and the charming Paradise sank down, deeper and deeper. The Prince saw it vanish into the black night; like a little bright star it gleamed out of the far distance. A deadly chill ran through his frame, and he closed his eyes and lay for a long time as one dead.

The cold rain fell upon his face, the keen wind roared round his head, and then his senses returned to him.

'What have I done?' he sighed. 'I have sinned like Adam—sinned so that Paradise has sunk deep down!'

And he opened his eyes, and the star in the distance—the star that gleamed like the Paradise that had sunk down, was the morning star in the sky.

He stood up, and found himself in the great forest, close by the Cave of the Winds, and the mother of the Winds

sat by his side : she looked angry, and raised her arm in the air.

‘The very first evening!’ said she. ‘I thought it would be so! Yes, if you were my son, you would have to go into the sack!’

‘Yes, he shall go in there!’ said Death. He was a strong old man, with a scythe in his hand, and with great black wings. ‘Yes, he shall be laid in his coffin, but not yet: I only register him, and let him wander awhile in the world to expiate his sins and to grow better. But one day I shall come. When he least expects it, I shall clap him in the black coffin, put him on my head, and fly up towards the star. There, too, blooms the Garden of Paradise; and if he is good and pious he will go in there; but if his thoughts are evil, and his heart still full of sin, he will sink with his coffin deeper than Paradise has sunk, and only every thousandth year I shall fetch him, that he may sink deeper, or that he may attain to the star—the shining star up yonder!’

THE FLYING TRUNK

THERE was once a merchant, who was so rich that he could pave the whole street with silver coins, and almost have enough left for a little lane. But he did not do that; he knew how to employ his money differently. When he spent a shilling he got back a crown, such a clever merchant was he; and this continued till he died.

His son now got all this money; and he lived merrily, going to the masquerade every evening, making kites out of dollar notes, and playing at ducks and drakes on the sea coast with gold pieces instead of pebbles. In this way the money might soon be spent, and indeed it was so. At last he had no more than four shillings left, and no clothes to wear but a pair of slippers and an old dressing-gown. Now his friends did not trouble themselves any more about him, as they could not walk with him in the street; but one of them, who was good-natured, sent him an old trunk, with the remark, ‘Pack up!’ Yes, that was all very well,

but he had nothing to pack, therefore he seated himself in the trunk.

That was a wonderful trunk. So soon as any one pressed the lock, the trunk could fly. This it now did ; *whirr !* away it flew with him through the chimney and over the clouds, farther and farther away. But as often as the bottom of the trunk cracked a little he was in great fear lest it might go to pieces, and then he would have thrown a fine somersault !



In that way he came to the land of the Turks. He hid the trunk in a wood under some dry leaves, and then went into the town. He could do that very well, for among the Turks all the people went dressed like himself in dressing-gown and slippers. Then he met a nurse with a little child.

‘Here, you Turkish nurse,’ he began, ‘what kind of a great castle is that close by the town, in which the windows are so high up ?’

‘There dwells the Sultan’s daughter,’ replied she. ‘It

is prophesied that she will be very unhappy respecting a lover ; and therefore nobody may go to her, unless the Sultan and Sultana are there too.'

'Thank you !' said the merchant's son ; and he went out into the forest, seated himself in his trunk, flew on the roof, and crept through the window into the Princess's room.

She was lying asleep on the sofa, and she was so beautiful that the merchant's son was compelled to kiss her. Then she awoke, and was very much startled ; but he said he was a Turkish angel who had come down to her through the air, and that pleased her.

They sat down side by side, and he told her stories about her eyes ; he told her they were the most glorious dark lakes, and that thoughts were swimming about in them like mermaids. And he told her about her forehead ; that it was a snowy mountain with the most splendid halls and pictures. And he told her about the stork who brings the lovely little children.

Yes, those were fine histories ! Then he asked the Princess if she would marry him, and she said 'Yes,' directly.

'But you must come here on Saturday,' said she. 'Then the Sultan and the Sultana will be here to tea. They will be very proud that I am to marry a Turkish angel. But take care that you know a very pretty story, for both my parents are very fond indeed of stories. My mother likes them high-flown and moral, but my father likes them merry, so that one can laugh.'

'Yes, I shall bring no marriage gift but a story,' said he ; and so they parted. But the Princess gave him a sabre, the sheath embroidered with gold pieces, and that was very useful to him.

Now he flew away, bought a new dressing-gown, and sat in the forest and made up a story ; it was to be ready by Saturday, and that was not an easy thing.

By the time he had finished it Saturday had come. The Sultan and his wife and all the court were at the Princess's to tea. He was received very graciously.

'Will you tell us a story ?' said the Sultana ; 'one that is deep and edifying.'

‘Yes, but one that we can laugh at,’ said the Sultan.

‘Certainly,’ he replied ; and began. And now listen well.

‘There was once a bundle of Matches, and these Matches were particularly proud of their high descent. Their genealogical tree, that is to say, the great fir tree of which each of them was a little splinter, had been a great old tree out in the forest. The Matches now lay between a Tinder-Box and an old iron Pot ; and they were telling about the days of their youth. “Yes, when we were upon the green boughs,” they said, “then we really were upon the green boughs ! Every morning and evening there was diamond tea for us, I mean dew ; we had sunshine all day long whenever the sun shone, and all the little birds had to tell stories. We could see very well that we were rich, for the other trees were only dressed out in summer, while our family had the means to wear green dresses in the winter as well. But then the woodcutter came, like a great revolution, and our family was broken up. The head of the family got an appointment as mainmast in a first-rate ship, which could sail round the world if necessary ; the other branches went to other places, and now we have the office of kindling a light for the vulgar herd. That’s how we grand people came to be in the kitchen.”

“My fate was of a different kind,” said the iron Pot which stood next to the Matches. “From the beginning, ever since I came into the world, there has been a great deal of scouring and cooking done in me. I look after the practical part, and am the first here in the house. My only pleasure is to sit in my place after dinner, very clean and neat, and to carry on a sensible conversation with my comrades. But except the Water Pot, which sometimes is taken down into the courtyard, we always live within our four walls. Our only newsmonger is the Market Basket ; but he speaks very uneasily about the government and the people. Yes, the other day there was an old pot that fell down from fright, and burst. He’s liberal, I can tell you !” “Now you’re talking too much,” the Tinder-Box interrupted, and the steel struck against the flint, so that sparks flew out. “Shall we not have a merry evening ?”

“Yes, let us talk about who is the grandest,” said the Matches.

“ “ No, I don't like to talk about myself,” retorted the Pot. “ Let us get up an evening entertainment. I will begin. I will tell a story from real life, something that every one has experienced, so that we can easily imagine the situation, and take pleasure in it. On the Baltic, by the Danish beech-trees——”

“ “ That's a pretty beginning ! ” cried all the Plates. “ That will be a story we shall like.”

“ “ Yes, there I spent my youth in a quiet family where the furniture was polished, and the floors scoured, and new curtains were put up every fortnight.”

“ “ What an interesting way you have of telling a story ! ” said the Carpet Broom. “ One can tell directly that the narrator is a woman. There's something pure runs through it.”

“ “ Yes, one feels that,” said the Water Pot, and out of delight it gave a little hop, so that there was a splash on the floor.

“ And the Pot went on telling her story, and the end was as good as the beginning.

“ All the Plates rattled with joy, and the Carpet Broom brought some green parsley out of the dust hole, and put it like a wreath on the Pot, for he knew that it would vex the others. “ If I crown her to-day,” it thought, “ she will crown me to-morrow.”

“ “ Now I'll dance,” said the Fire Tongs, and she danced. Preserve us ! how that implement could lift up one leg ! The old Chair Cushion burst to see it. “ Shall I be crowned too ? ” thought the Tongs ; and indeed a wreath was awarded.

“ “ They're only common people, after all ! ” thought the Matches.

Now the Tea Urn was to sing ; but she said she had taken cold, and could not sing unless she felt boiling within. But that was only affectation ; she did not want to sing, except when she was in the parlour with the grand people.

“ In the window sat an old Quill Pen, with which the maid generally wrote : there was nothing remarkable about this pen, except that it had been dipped too deep into the ink, but she was proud of that. “ If the Tea Urn won't sing,” she said, “ she may leave it alone. Outside hangs

a nightingale in a cage, and he can sing. He hasn't had any education, but this evening we'll say nothing about that."

" "I think it very wrong," said the Tea Kettle—he was the kitchen singer, and half-brother to the Tea Urn—"that that rich and foreign bird should be listened to! Is that patriotic? Let the Market Basket decide."

" "I am vexed," said the Market Basket. "No one can imagine how much I am secretly vexed. Is that a proper way of spending the evening? Would it not be more sensible to put the house in order? Let each one go to his own place, and I would arrange the whole game. That would be quite another thing."

" "Yes, let us make a disturbance," cried they all. Then the door opened, and the maid came in, and they all stood still; not one stirred. But there was not one pot among them who did not know what he could do, and how grand he was. "Yes, if I had liked," each one thought, "it might have been a very merry evening."

"The servant girl took the Matches and lighted the fire with them. Mercy! how they sputtered and burst out into flame! "Now every one can see," thought they, "that we are the first. How we shine! what a light!"—and they burned out."

"That was a capital story," said the Sultana. "I feel myself quite carried away to the kitchen, to the Matches. Yes, now thou shalt marry our daughter."

"Yes, certainly," said the Sultan, "thou shalt marry our daughter on Monday."

And they called him *thou*, because he was to belong to the family.

The wedding was decided on, and on the evening before it the whole city was illuminated. Biscuits and cakes were thrown among the people, the street boys stood on their toes, called out 'Hurrah!' and whistled on their fingers. It was uncommonly splendid.

"Yes, I shall have to give something as a treat," thought the merchant's son. So he bought rockets and crackers, and every imaginable sort of firework, put them all into his trunk, and flew up into the air.

'Crack!' how they went, and how they went off! All

the Turks hopped up with such a start that their slippers flew about their ears ; such a meteor they had never yet seen. Now they could understand that it must be a Turkish angel who was going to marry the Princess.

As soon as the merchant's son descended again into the forest with his trunk, he thought, ' I will go into the town now, and hear how it all looked.' And it was quite natural that he wanted to do so

What stories people told ! Every one whom he asked about it had seen it in a separate way ; but one and all thought it fine.

' I saw the Turkish angel himself,' said one. ' He had eyes like glowing stars, and a beard like foaming water.'

' He flew in a fiery mantle,' said another ; ' the most lovely little cherub peeped forth from among the folds.'

Yes, they were wonderful things that he heard ; and on the following day he was to be married.

Now he went back to the forest to rest himself in his trunk. But what had become of that ? A spark from the fireworks had set fire to it, and the trunk was burned to ashes. He could not fly any more, and could not get to his bride.

She stood all day on the roof waiting ; and most likely she is waiting still. But he wanders through the world telling fairy tales ; but they are not so merry as that one he told about the Matches.

THE STORKS

ON the last house in a little village stood a Stork's nest. The Mother-Stork sat in it with her four young ones, who stretched out their heads with the pointed black beaks, for their beaks had not yet turned red. A little way off stood the Father-Stork, all alone on the ridge of the roof, quite upright and stiff ; he had drawn up one of his legs, so as not to be quite idle while he stood sentry. One would have thought he had been carved out of wood, so still did he stand. He thought, ' It must look very grand, that my wife has a sentry standing by her nest. They

can't tell that it is her husband. They certainly think I have been commanded to stand here. That looks so aristocratic !' And he went on standing on one leg.

Below in the street a whole crowd of children were



playing ; and when they caught sight of the Storks, one of the boldest of the boys, and afterwards all of them, sang the old verse about the Storks. But they only sang it just as he could remember it :

Stork, stork, fly away ;
Go and stay at home to-day.
Your wife is lying in the nest,
With four young beneath her breast.

The first he will be hanged,
The second will be banged,
The third he will be burned,
And the fourth one will be turned
Outside in !

‘ Just hear what those boys are singing ! ’ said the little Stork-children. ‘ They say we’re to be hanged and burned.’

‘ You’re not to care for that ! ’ said the Mother-Stork.
‘ Don’t listen to it, and then it won’t matter.’

But the boys went on singing, and pointed at the Storks mockingly with their fingers ; only one boy, whose name was Peter, declared that it was a sin to make jest of animals, and he would not join in it at all.

The Mother-Stork comforted her children. ‘ Don’t you mind it at all,’ she said ; ‘ see how quiet your father stands, though it’s only on one leg.’

‘ We are very much afraid,’ said the young Storks : and they drew their heads far back into the nest.

Now to-day, when the children came out again to play, and saw the Storks, they sang their song :

The first he will be hanged,
The second will be banged——

‘ Shall we be hanged and burned ? ’ asked the young Storks.

‘ No, certainly not,’ replied the mother. ‘ You shall learn to fly ; I’ll exercise you ; then we shall fly out into the meadows and pay a visit to the frogs ; they will bow before us in the water, and sing “ Co-ax ! co-ax ! ” and then we shall eat them up. That will be a real pleasure.’

‘ And what then ? ’ asked the young Storks.

‘ Then all the Storks will assemble, all that are here in the whole country, and the autumn exercises begin : then one must fly well, for that is highly important, for whoever cannot fly properly will be thrust dead by the general’s beak ; so take care and learn well when the exercising begins.’

‘ But then we shall be killed, as the boys say :—and only listen, now they’re singing again.’

‘ Listen to me, and not to them,’ said the Mother-Stork. ‘ After the great review we shall fly away to the warm countries, far away from here, over mountains and forests. We shall fly to Egypt, where there are three-cornered houses of stone, which run up to a point and tower above the clouds ; they are called pyramids, and are older than a stork can imagine. There is a river in that country which runs out of its bed, and then all the land is turned to mud. One walks about in the mud, and eats frogs.’

‘ Oh ! ’ cried all the young ones.

‘ Yes ! It is glorious there ! One does nothing all day long but eat ; and while we are so comfortable over there, here there is not a green leaf on the trees ; here it is so cold that the clouds freeze to pieces, and fall down in little white rags ! ’

It was the snow that she meant, but she could not explain it in any other way.

‘ And do the naughty boys freeze to pieces ? ’ asked the young Storks.

‘ No, they do not freeze to pieces ; but they are not far from it, and must sit in the dark room and cower. You, on the other hand, can fly about in foreign lands, where there are flowers, and the sun shines warm.’

Now some time had elapsed, and the nestlings had grown so large that they could stand upright in the nest and look far around ; and the Father-Stork came every day with delicious frogs, little snakes, and all kinds of stork-dainties as he found them. Oh ! it looked funny when he performed feats before them ! He laid his head quite back upon his tail, and clapped with his beak as if it had been a little clapper ; and then he told them stories, all about the marshes.

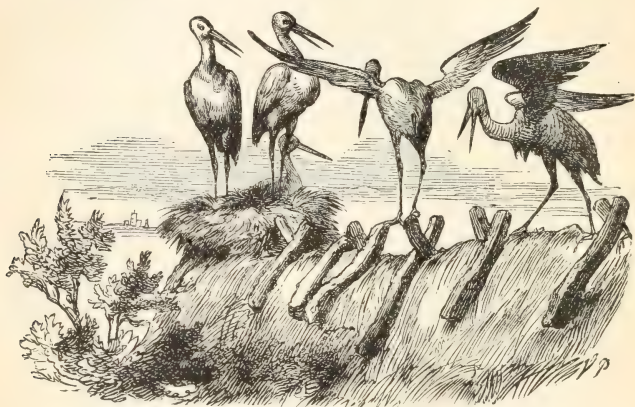
‘ Listen ! now you must learn to fly,’ said the Mother-Stork one day ; and all the four young ones had to go out on the ridge of the roof. Oh, how they tottered ! how they balanced themselves with their wings, and yet they were nearly falling down.

‘ Only look at me,’ said the mother. ‘ Thus you must hold your heads ! Thus you must pitch your feet ! One, two ! one, two ! That’s what will help you on in the world.’

Then she flew a little way, and the young ones made a little clumsy leap. Bump!—there they lay, for their bodies were too heavy.

‘I will not fly!’ said one of the young Storks, and crept back into the nest; ‘I don’t care about getting to the warm countries.’

‘Do you want to freeze to death here, when the winter comes? Are the boys to come and hang you, and singe you, and roast you? Now I’ll call them.’



‘Oh, no!’ cried the young Stork, and hopped out on to the roof again like the rest.

On the third day they could actually fly a little, and then they thought they could also soar and hover in the air. They tried it, but—bump!—down they tumbled, and they had to flap their wings again quickly enough. Now the boys came into the street again, and sang their song:

Stork, stork, fly away!

‘Shall we fly down and pick their eyes out?’ asked the young Storks.

‘No,’ replied the mother, ‘let them alone. Only listen to me, that’s far more important. One, two, three!—now

we fly round to the right. One, two, three!—now to the left round the chimney! See, that was very good! the last flap with the wings was so neat and correct that you shall have permission to-morrow to fly with me to the marsh! Several nice stork families go there with their young: show them that mine are the nicest; and that you can stalk proudly; that looks well, and will get you consideration.'

'But are we not to take revenge on the rude boys?' asked the young Storks.

'Let them scream as much as they like. You will fly up to the clouds, and get to the land of the pyramids, when they will have to shiver, and not have a green leaf or a sweet apple.'

'Yes, we will revenge ourselves!' they whispered to one another; and then the exercising went on.

Among all the boys down in the street, the one most bent upon singing the teasing song was he who had begun it, and he was quite a little boy. He could hardly be more than six years old. The young Storks certainly thought he was a hundred, for he was much bigger than their mother and father; and how should they know what age children and grown-up people may be? Their revenge was to come upon this boy, for it was he who had begun, and he always kept on. The young Storks were very angry; and as they grew bigger they were less inclined to bear it: at last their mother had to promise them that they should be revenged, but not till the last day of their stay.

'We must first see how you behave at the grand review. If you get through badly, so that the general stabs you through the chest with his beak, the boys will be right, at least in one way. Let us see.'

'Yes, you shall see!' cried the young Storks; and then they took all imaginable pains. They practised every day, and flew so neatly and so lightly that it was a pleasure to see them.

Now the autumn came on; all the Storks began to assemble, to fly away to the warm countries while it is winter here. That *was* a review. They had to fly over forests and villages, to show how well they could soar, for it was a long journey they had before them. The young

Storks did their part so well that they got as a mark, 'Remarkably well, with frogs and snakes.' That was the highest mark ; and they might eat the frogs and snakes ; and that is what they did.

'Now we will be revenged !' they said.

'Yes, certainly !' said the Mother-Stork. 'What I have thought of will be the best. I know the pond in which all the little mortals lie till the stork comes and brings them to their parents. The pretty little babies lie there and dream more sweetly than they ever dream afterwards. All parents are glad to have such a child, and all children want to have a sister or a brother. Now we will fly to the pond, and bring one for each of the children who have not sung the naughty song and laughed at the storks.'

'But he who began to sing—that naughty, ugly boy !' screamed the young Storks ; 'what shall we do with him ?'

'There is a little dead child in the pond, one that has dreamed itself to death ; we will bring that for him. Then he will cry because we have brought him a little dead brother. But that good boy—you have not forgotten him, the one who said, "It is wrong to laugh at animals !" for him we will bring a brother and a sister too. And as his name is Peter, all of you shall be called Peter too.'

And it was done as she said ; all the storks were named Peter, and so they are all called even now.



THE METAL PIG

IN the city of Florence, not far from the *Piazza del Granduca*, there runs a little cross-street, I think it is called *Porta Rossa*. In this street, in front of a kind of market hall where vegetables are sold, there lies a Pig artistically fashioned of metal. The fresh clear water pours from the snout of the creature, which has become a blackish-green from age ; only the snout shines as if it had been polished, and indeed it has been, by many hundreds of children and poor people, who seize it with their hands, and place their mouths close to the mouth of the animal, to drink. It is a perfect picture to see the well-shaped creature clasped by a half-naked boy, who lays his red lips against its snout.

Every one who comes to Florence can easily find the place ; he need only ask the first beggar he meets for the Metal Pig, and he will find it.

It was late on a winter evening. The mountains were covered with snow ; but the moon shone, and moonlight in Italy is just as good as the light of a murky Northern winter's day ; nay, it is better, for the air shines and lifts us up, while in the North the cold grey leaden covering seems to press us downwards to the earth—the cold damp earth, which will some day press down our coffin.

In the Grand Duke's palace garden, under a roof of pines, where a thousand roses bloom in winter, a little ragged boy had been sitting all day long, a boy who might serve as a type of Italy, pretty and smiling, and yet suffering. He was hungry and thirsty, but no one gave him anything ; and when it became dark, and the garden was to be closed, the porter turned him out. Long he stood musing on the bridge that spans the Arno, and looked at the stars, whose light glittered in the water between him and the splendid marble bridge.

He took the way towards the Metal Pig, half knelt down, clasped his arms round it, put his mouth against

its shining snout, and drank the fresh water in deep draughts. Close by lay a few leaves of salad and one or two chestnuts ; these were his supper. No one was in the street but himself—it belonged to him alone, and so he boldly sat down on the Pig's back, bent forward, so that his curly head rested on the head of the animal, and before he was aware fell asleep.

It was midnight. The Metal Pig stirred, and he heard it say quite distinctly, ' You little boy, hold tight, for now I am going to run,' and away it ran with him. This was a wonderful ride. First they got to the *Piazza del Granduca*,



and the metal horse which carries the Duke's statue neighed loudly, the painted coats of arms on the old council-house looked like transparent pictures, and Michael Angelo's ' David ' swung his sling : there was a strange life stirring among them. The metal groups representing Perseus, and the rape of the Sabines, stood there only too much alive : a cry of mortal fear escaped them, and resounded over the splendid lonely square.

By the *Palazzo degli Uffizi*, in the arcade, where the nobility assemble for the Carnival amusements, the Metal Pig stopped. ' Hold tight,' said the creature, ' for now we are going upstairs.' The little boy spoke not a word, for he was half frightened half delighted.

They came into a long gallery where the boy had already been. The walls were adorned with pictures ; here stood statues and busts, all in the most charming light, as if it had been broad day ; but the most beautiful of all was when the door of a side room opened : the little boy could remember the splendour that was there, but on this night everything shone in the most glorious colours.

Here stood a beautiful woman, as radiant in beauty as nature and the greatest master of sculpture could make her : she moved her graceful limbs, dolphins sprang at her feet, and immortality shone out of her eyes. The world calls her the Venus de Medici. By her side are statues in which the spirit of life had been breathed into the stone ; they are handsome unclothed men. One was sharpening a sword, and was called the Grinder ; the Wrestling Gladiators formed another group ; and the sword was sharpened, and they strove for the goddess of beauty.

The boy was dazzled by all this pomp : the walls gleamed with bright colours, and everything was life and movement there. In twofold form was seen the image of Venus, the earthly Venus, full and glowing, as Titian had seen her. The pictures of two lovely women ; their beautiful unveiled limbs were stretched out on the soft cushions ; their bosoms heaved, and their heads moved, so that the rich locks fell down over the rounded shoulders, while their dark eyes uttered glowing thoughts. But not one of all the pictures dared to step quite out of its frame. The Goddess of Beauty herself, the Gladiators and the Grinder, remained in their places, for the glory that shone from the Madonna, Jesus, and St. John, restrained them. The holy pictures were pictures no longer, they were the Holy Ones themselves.

What splendour, what beauty shone from hall to hall ! and the little boy saw everything plainly, for the Metal Pig went step by step through all this scene of magnificence. Each fresh sight effaced the last. One picture only fixed itself firmly in his soul, especially through the very happy children introduced into it ; the little boy had once nodded to these in the daylight.

Many persons pass by this picture with indifference, and yet it contains a treasure of poetry. It represents the

Saviour descending into hell. But these are not the damned whom the spectator sees around him, they are the heathens. The Florentine Angiolo Bronzino painted this picture. Most beautiful is the expression on the faces of the children,—the full confidence that they will get to heaven : two little beings are already embracing, and one little one stretches out his hand towards another who stands below him, and points to himself as if he were saying, ‘ I am going to heaven ! ’ The older people stand uncertain, hoping, or bowing in humble adoration before the Lord Jesus. The boy’s eyes rested longer on this picture than on any other. The Metal Pig stood still before it. A low sigh was heard : did it come from the picture or from the animal ? The boy lifted up his hands towards the smiling children ; then the Pig ran away with him, away through the open vestibule.

‘ Thanks and blessings to you, you dear thing ! ’ said the little boy, and caressed the Metal Pig, as it sprang down the steps with him.

‘ Thanks and blessings to yourself,’ replied the Metal Pig. ‘ I have helped you, and you have helped me, for only with an innocent child on my back do I receive power to run ! Yes, you see, I may even step into the rays of the lamp in front of the picture of the Madonna, I can carry you everywhere, only I may not go into the church. But from without, when you are with me, I may look in through the open door. Do not get down from my back ; if you do so, I shall lie dead as you see me in the daytime at the *Porta Rossa*.’

‘ I will stay with you, my dear creature ! ’ cried the child.

So they went in hot haste through the streets of Florence, out into the place before the church of *Santa Croce*. The folding doors flew open, and lights gleamed out from the altar through the church into the deserted square.

A wonderful blaze of light streamed forth from a monument in the left aisle, and a thousand moving stars seemed to form a glory round it. A coat of arms shone upon the grave, a red ladder in a blue field seemed to glow like fire. It was the grave of Galileo. The monument is unadorned, but the red ladder is a significant emblem, as if it were that of art, for in art the way always leads up a burning ladder,

towards heaven. The prophets of mind soar upwards towards heaven, like Elias of old.

To the right, in the aisle of the church, every statue on the richly carved sarcophagi seemed endowed with life. Here stood Michael Angelo, there Dante with the laurel wreath round his brow, Alfieri and Machiavelli ; for here the great men, the pride of Italy, rest side by side. It is a glorious church, far more beautiful than the marble cathedral of Florence, though not so large.

It seemed as if the marble vestments stirred, as if the great forms raised their heads higher and looked up, amid song and music, to the bright altar glowing with colour, where the white-clad boys swing the golden censers ; and the strong fragrance streamed out of the church into the open square.

The boy stretched forth his hand towards the gleaming light, and in a moment the Metal Pig resumed its headlong career : he was obliged to cling tightly ; and the wind whistled about his ears ; he heard the church door creak on its hinges as it closed ; but at the same moment his senses seemed to desert him, he felt a cold shudder pass over him, and awoke.

It was morning, and he was still sitting on the Metal Pig, which stood where it always stood on the *Porta Rossa*, and he had slipped half off its back.

Fear and trembling filled the soul of the boy at the thought of her whom he called mother, and who had yesterday sent him forth to bring money ; for he had none, and was hungry and thirsty. Once more he clasped his arms round the neck of his metal horse, kissed its lips, and nodded farewell to it. Then he wandered away into one of the narrowest streets, where there was scarcely room for a laden ass. A great iron-clamped door stood ajar ; he passed through it, and climbed up a brick stair with dirty walls and a rope for a balustrade, till he came to an open gallery hung with rags ; from here a flight of stairs led down into the court, where there was a fountain, and great iron wires led up to the different stories, and many water-buckets hung side by side, and at times the roller creaked, and one of the buckets would dance into the air, swaying so that the water splashed out of it down

into the courtyard. A second ruinous brick staircase here led upwards. Two Russian sailors were running briskly down, and almost overturned the poor boy: they were going home from their nightly carouse. A strongly-built woman, no longer young, with coarse black hair, followed them.

‘What do you bring home?’ she asked the boy.

‘Don’t be angry,’ he pleaded. ‘I received nothing—nothing at all.’ And he seized the mother’s dress, and would have kissed it.

They went into the little room. I will not describe it, but only say that there stood in it an earthen pot with handles, made for holding fire, and called a *marito*. This pot she took in her arms, warmed her fingers, and pushed the boy with her elbow.

‘Certainly you must have brought some money?’ said she.

The boy wept, and she struck him with her foot, so that he cried aloud.

‘Will you be silent, or I’ll break your screaming head!’

And she brandished the fire-pot which she held in her hand. The boy crouched down to the earth with a scream of terror. Then a neighbour stepped in, also with a *marito* in her arms.

‘Felicita,’ she said, ‘what are you doing to the child?’

‘The child is mine,’ retorted Felicita. ‘I can murder him if I like, and you too, Giannina.’

And she swung her fire-pot. The other lifted up hers in self-defence, and the two pots clashed together with such fury that fragments, fire, and ashes flew about the room; but at the same moment the boy rushed out at the door, sped across the courtyard, and fled from the house. The poor child ran till he was quite out of breath. He stopped by the church, whose great doors had opened to him the previous night, and went in. Everything was radiant. The boy knelt down at the first grave on the right hand, the grave of Michael Angelo, and soon he sobbed aloud. People came and went, and Mass was said; but no one noticed the boy, only an elderly citizen stood still, looked at him, and then went away like the rest.

Hunger and thirst tormented the child; he was quite

faint and ill, and he crept into a corner between the wall and the marble monument, and went to sleep. Towards evening he was awakened by a tug at his sleeve ; he started up, and the same citizen stood before him.

‘Are you ill ? Where do you live ? Have you been here all day ?’ were three of the many questions the old man asked of him.

He answered, and the old man took him into his little house close by, in a back street. They came into a glover’s



workshop, where a woman sat sewing busily. A little white Spitz dog, so closely shaven that his pink skin could be seen, frisked about on the table and gambolled before the boy.

‘Innocent souls soon make acquaintance,’ said the woman.

And she caressed the boy and the dog. The good people gave the child food and drink, and said he should be permitted to stay the night with them ; and next day Father Guiseppe would speak to his mother. A little simple bed was assigned to him, but for him who had often slept on the hard stones it was a royal couch ; and he slept sweetly,

and dreamed of the splendid pictures and of the Metal Pig.

Father Guiseppe went out next morning : the poor child was not glad of this, for he knew that the object of the errand was to send him back to his mother. He wept, and kissed the merry little dog, and the woman nodded approvingly at both.

What news did Father Guiseppe bring home ? He spoke a great deal with his wife, and she nodded and stroked the boy's cheek.

'He is a capital lad !' said she. 'He may become an accomplished glove-maker, like you ; and look what delicate fingers he has ! Madonna intended him for a glove-maker.'

And the boy stayed in the house, and the woman herself taught him to sew : he ate well, slept well, and became merry, and began to tease Bellissima, as the little dog was called ; but the woman grew angry at this, and scolded and threatened him with her finger. This touched the boy's heart, and he sat thoughtful in his little chamber. This chamber looked upon the street, in which skins were dried ; there were thick bars of iron before his window. He could not sleep, for the Metal Pig was always present in his thoughts, and suddenly he heard outside a pit-pat. That must be the Pig ! He sprang to the window, but nothing was to be seen—it had passed by already.

'Help the gentleman to carry his box of colours,' said the woman next morning to the boy, when their young neighbour the artist passed by, carrying a paint-box and a large rolled canvas.

The boy took the box, and followed the painter ; they betook themselves to the gallery, and mounted the same staircase which he remembered well from the night when he had ridden on the Metal Pig. He recognized the statues and pictures, the beautiful marble Venus, and the Venus that lived in the picture ; and again he saw the Madonna, and the Saviour, and St. John.

They stood still before the picture by Bronzino, in which Christ is descending into hell, and the children smiling around him in the sweet expectation of heaven. The poor child smiled too, for he felt as if his heaven were here.

‘Go home now,’ said the painter, when the boy had stood until the other had set up his easel.

‘May I see you paint?’ asked the boy. ‘May I see you put the picture upon this white canvas?’

‘I am not going to paint yet,’ replied the man; and he brought out a piece of black crayon. His hand moved quickly; his eye measured the great picture, and though nothing appeared but a thin line, the figure of the Saviour stood there, as in the coloured picture.

‘Why don’t you go?’ said the painter.

And the boy wandered home silently, and seated himself on the table and learned to sew gloves.

But all day long his thoughts were in the picture gallery; and so it came that he pricked his fingers, and was awkward; but he did not tease Bellissima. When evening came, and when the house door stood open, he crept out: it was cold but starlight, a bright beautiful evening. Away he went through the already deserted streets, and soon came to the Metal Pig. He bent down on it, kissed its shining mouth, and seated himself on its back.

‘You happy creature!’ he said; ‘how I have longed for you! We must take a ride to-night.’

The Metal Pig lay motionless, and the fresh stream gushed forth from its mouth. The little boy sat astride on its back: then something tugged at his clothes. He looked down, and there was Bellissima—little smooth-shaven Bellissima—the dog had crept out of the house along with him, and had followed him without his noticing it. Bellissima barked as if she would have said, ‘Here am I too: why are you sitting there?’ A fiery dragon could not have terrified the boy so much as did the little dog in this place. Bellissima in the street, and not *dressed*, as the old lady called it! What would be the end of it? The dog never came out in winter, except attired in a little lamb-skin, which had been cut out and made into a coat for him; it was made to fasten with a red ribbon round the little dog’s neck and body, and was adorned with bows and with bells. The dog looked almost like a little kid, when in winter he got permission to patter out with his mistress. Bellissima was outside, and not dressed! what would be the end of it? All his fancies were put to flight;

yet the boy kissed the Metal Pig once more, and then took Bellissima on his arm : the little thing trembled with cold, therefore the boy ran as fast as he could.

‘ What are you running away with there ? ’ asked two gendarmes whom he met, and at whom Bellissima barked. ‘ Where have you stolen that pretty dog ? ’ they asked, and they took it away from him.

‘ Oh, give it back to me ! ’ cried the boy despairingly.

‘ If you have not stolen him, you may say at home that the dog may be sent for to the watch-house.’ And they told him where the watch-house was, and went away with Bellissima.

Here was a terrible calamity ! The boy did not know whether he should jump into the Arno, or go home and confess everything ; they would certainly kill him, he thought.

‘ But I will gladly be killed ; then I shall die and get to heaven,’ he reasoned. And he went home, principally with the idea of being killed.

The door was locked, and he could not reach the knocker ; no one was in the street, but a stone lay there, and with this he thundered at the door.

‘ Who is there ? ’ cried somebody from within.

‘ It is I,’ said he. ‘ The dog is gone. Open the door, and then kill me ! ’

There was quite a panic. Madame was especially concerned for poor Bellissima. She immediately looked at the wall, where the dog’s dress usually hung, and there was the little lamb-skin.

‘ Bellissima in the watch-house ! ’ she cried aloud. ‘ You bad boy ! How did you entice her out ? She’ll be frozen, the poor delicate little thing ! among those rough soldiers.’

The father was at once sent off—the woman lamented and the boy wept. All the inhabitants of the house came together, and among the rest the painter : he took the boy between his knees and questioned him ; and in broken sentences he heard the whole story about the Metal Pig and the gallery, which was certainly rather incomprehensible.

The painter consoled the little fellow, and tried to calm the old lady’s anger ; but she would not be pacified until the father came in with Bellissima, who had been among

the soldiers ; then there was great rejoicing ; and the painter caressed the boy, and gave him a handful of pictures.

Oh, those were capital pieces—such funny heads !—and truly the Metal Pig was there among them, bodily. Oh, nothing could be more superb ! By means of a few strokes it was made to stand there on the paper, and even the house that stood behind it was sketched in.

Oh, if one could only draw and paint ! Then one could bring the whole world to oneself.

On the first leisure moment of the following day, the little fellow seized the pencil, and on the back of one of the pictures he attempted to copy the drawing of the Metal Pig, and he succeeded !—it was certainly rather crooked, rather up and down, one leg thick and another thin ; but still it was to be recognized, and he rejoiced himself at it. The pencil would not quite work as it should do, that he could well observe ; but on the next day a second Metal Pig was drawn by the side of the first, and this looked a hundred times better ; and the third was already so good that every one could tell what it was meant for.

But the glove-making prospered little, and his errands in the town were executed but slowly ; for the Metal Pig had taught him that all pictures may be drawn on paper ; and Florence is a picture-book for any one who chooses to turn over its pages. On the *Piazza del Trinità* stands a slender pillar, and upon it the goddess of justice, blind-folded and with her scales in her hand. Soon she was placed on the paper, and it was the little glove-maker's boy who placed her there. The collection of pictures increased, but as yet it only contained representations of lifeless objects, when one day Bellissima came gambolling before him.

'Stand still !' said he, 'then you shall be made beautiful and put into my collection.'

But Bellissima would not stand still, so she had to be bound fast ; her head and tail were tied, and she barked and jumped, and the string had to be pulled tight ; and then the signora came in

'You wicked boy !—The poor creature !' was all she could utter.

And she pushed the boy aside, thrust him away with

her foot, ordered him out of her house, and called him a most ungrateful good-for-nothing and a wicked boy ; and then, weeping, she kissed her little half-strangled Bellissima.

At this very moment the painter came upstairs, and here is the turning-point of the story.

In the year 1834 there was an exhibition in the Academy of Arts at Florence. Two pictures, placed side by side, collected a number of spectators. The smaller of the two represented a merry little boy who sat drawing, with a little white Spitz dog, curiously shorn, for his model ; but the animal would not stand still, and was therefore bound by a string fastened to its head and its tail. There was a truth and life in this picture that interested every one. The painter was said to be a young Florentine, who had been found in the streets in his childhood, had been brought up by an old glove-maker, and had taught himself to draw. It was further said that a painter, now become famous, had discovered this talent just as the boy was to be sent away for tying up the favourite little dog of Madame, and using it as a model.

The glove-maker's boy had become a great painter : the picture proved this, and still more the larger picture that stood beside it. Here was represented only one figure, a handsome boy, clad in rags, asleep in the street, and leaning against the Metal Pig in the *Porta Rossa* street. All the spectators knew the spot. The child's arms rested upon the head of the Pig ; the little fellow was fast asleep, and the lamp before the picture of the Madonna threw a strong effective light on the pale delicate face of the child—it was a beautiful picture ! A great gilt frame surrounded it, and on one corner of the frame a laurel wreath had been hung ; but a black band wound among the green leaves, and a streamer of crape hung down from it. For within the last few days the young artist had—died !

OLE LUK-OIE

THERE 's nobody in the whole world who knows so many stories as Ole Luk-Oie. He can tell capital histories.

Well on in the evening, when the children still sit nicely at table, or upon their stools, Ole Luk-Oie comes. He comes up the stairs quite softly, for he walks in his socks :



he opens the door noiselessly, and *whisk!* he squirts sweet milk in the children's eyes, a small, small stream, but enough to prevent them from keeping their eyes open ; and thus they cannot see him. He creeps just among them, and blows softly upon their necks, and this makes their heads heavy. Yes, but it doesn't hurt them, for Ole Luk-Oie is very fond of the children ; he only wants them

to be quiet, and *that* they are not until they are taken to bed : they are to be quiet that he may tell them stories.

When the children sleep, Ole Luk-Oie sits down upon their bed. He is well dressed : his coat is of silk, but it is impossible to say of what colour, for it shines red, green, and blue, according as he turns. Under each arm he carries an umbrella : the one with pictures on it he spreads over the good children, and then they dream all night the most glorious stories ; but on his other umbrella nothing at all is painted : this he spreads over the naughty children, and these sleep in a dull way, and when they awake in the morning they have not dreamed of anything.

Now we shall hear how Ole Luk-Oie, every evening through one whole week, came to a little boy named Hjalmar, and what he told him. There are seven stories, for there are seven days in the week.

MONDAY

‘Listen,’ said Ole Luk-Oie in the evening, when he had put Hjalmar to bed ; ‘now I’ll decorate.’

And all the flowers in the flower-pots became great trees, stretching out their long branches under the ceiling of the room and along the walls, so that the whole room looked like a beauteous bower ; and all the twigs were covered with flowers, and each flower was more beautiful than a rose, and smelt so sweet that one wanted to eat it—it was sweeter than jam. The fruit gleamed like gold, and there were cakes bursting with raisins. It was incomparably beautiful. But at the same time a terrible wail sounded from the table drawer, where Hjalmar’s school-book lay.

‘Whatever can that be ?’ said Ole Luk-Oie ; and he went to the table, and opened the drawer. It was the slate which was suffering from convulsions, for a wrong number had got into the sum, so that it was nearly falling in pieces ; the slate pencil tugged and jumped at its string, as if it had been a little dog who wanted to help the sum ; but he could not. And thus there was a great lamentation in Hjalmar’s copy-book ; it was quite terrible to hear. On each page the great letters stood in a row, one underneath the other, and each with a little one at its side ; that

was the copy ; and next to these were a few more letters which thought they looked just like the first ; and these Hjalmar had written ; but they lay down just as if they had tumbled over the pencil lines on which they were to stand.

‘ See, this is how you should hold yourselves,’ said the Copy. ‘ Look, sloping in this way, with a powerful swing !’

‘ Oh, we should be very glad to do that,’ replied Hjalmar’s Letters, ‘ but we cannot ; we are too weakly.’

‘ Then you must take medicine,’ said Ole Luk-Oie.

‘ Oh, no,’ cried they ; and they immediately stood up so gracefully that it was beautiful to behold.

‘ Yes, now we cannot tell any stories,’ said Ole Luk-Oie ; ‘ now I must exercise them. One, two ! one, two !’ and thus he exercised the Letters ; and they stood quite slender, and as beautiful as any copy can be. But when Ole Luk-Oie went away, and Hjalmar looked at them next morning, they were as weak and miserable as ever.

TUESDAY

As soon as Hjalmar was in bed, Ole Luk-Oie touched all the furniture in the room with his little magic squirt, and they immediately began to converse together, and each one spoke of itself, with the exception of the spittoon, which stood silent, and was vexed that they should be so vain as to speak only of themselves, and think only of themselves, without any regard for him who stood so modestly in the corner for every one’s use.

Over the chest of drawers hung a great picture in a gilt frame—it was a landscape. One saw therein large old trees, flowers in the grass, and a large lake with a river which flowed round about a forest, past many castles, and far out into the wide ocean.

Ole Luk-Oie touched the painting with his magic squirt, and the birds in it began to sing, the branches of the trees stirred, and the clouds began to move across it ; one could see their shadows glide over the landscape.

Now Ole Luk-Oie lifted little Hjalmar up to the frame, and put the boy’s feet into the picture, just in the high

grass ; and there he stood ; and the sun shone upon him through the branches of the trees. He ran to the water, and seated himself in a little boat which lay there ; it was painted red and white, the sails gleamed like silver, and six swans, each with a gold circlet round its neck and a bright blue star on its forehead, drew the boat past the great wood, where the trees told of robbers and witches, and the flowers told of the graceful little elves, and of what the butterflies had told them.

Gorgeous fishes, with scales like silver and gold, swam after their boat ; sometimes they gave a spring, so that it splashed in the water ; and birds, blue and red, little and great, flew after them in two long rows ; the gnats danced, and the cockchafers said, ‘ Boom ! boom ! ’ They all wanted to follow Hjalmar, and each one had a story to tell.

That *was* a pleasure voyage. Sometimes the forest was thick and dark, sometimes like a glorious garden full of sunlight and flowers ; and there were great palaces of glass and of marble ; on the balconies stood Princesses, and these were all little girls whom Hjalmar knew well—he had already played with them. Each one stretched forth her hand, and held out the prettiest sugar heart which ever a cake-woman could sell ; and Hjalmar took hold of each sugar heart as he passed by, and the Princess held fast, so that each of them got a piece—she the smaller share, and Hjalmar the larger. At each palace little Princes stood sentry. They shouldered golden swords, and caused raisins and tin soldiers to shower down : one could see that they were real Princes. Sometimes Hjalmar sailed through forests, sometimes through great halls or through the midst of a town. He also came to the town where his nurse lived, who had carried him in her arms when he was quite a little boy, and who had always been so kind to him ; and she nodded and beckoned, and sang the pretty verse she had made herself and had sent to Hjalmar.

I've loved thee, and kissed thee, Hjalmar, dear boy ;
I've watched thee waking and sleeping ;
May the good Lord guard thee in sorrow, in joy,
And have thee in His keeping.

And all the birds sang too, the flowers danced on their stalks, and the old trees nodded, just as if Ole Luk-Oie had been telling stories to *them*.

WEDNESDAY

How the rain was streaming down without ! Hjalmar could hear it in his sleep ; and when Ole Luk-Oie opened a window, the water stood right up to the window-sill : there was quite a lake outside, and a noble ship lay close by the house.

‘ If thou wilt sail with me, little Hjalmar,’ said Ole Luk-Oie, ‘ thou canst voyage to-night to foreign climes, and be back again to-morrow.’

And Hjalmar suddenly stood in his Sunday clothes upon the glorious ship, and immediately the weather became fine, and they sailed through the streets, and steered round by the church ; and now everything was one great wild ocean. They sailed on until land was no longer to be seen, and they saw a number of storks, who also came from their home, and were travelling towards the hot countries : these storks flew in a row, one behind the other, and they had already flown far—far ! One of them was so weary that his wings would scarcely carry him farther : he was the very last in the row, and soon remained a great way behind the rest ; at last he sank, with outspread wings, deeper and deeper ; he gave a few more strokes with his pinions, but it was of no use ; now he touched the rigging of the ship with his feet, then he glided down from the sail, and—bump !—he stood upon the deck.

Now the cabin boy took him and put him into the hen-coop with the Fowls, Ducks, and Turkeys ; the poor Stork stood among them quite embarrassed.

‘ Just look at the fellow ! ’ said all the Fowls.

And the Turkey-cock swelled himself up as much as ever he could, and asked the Stork who he was ; and the Ducks walked backwards and quacked to each other, ‘ Quackery ! quackery ! ’

And the Stork told them of hot Africa, of the pyramids, and of the ostrich, which runs like a wild horse through the desert ; but the Ducks did not understand what he said, and they said to one another,

‘We’re all of the same opinion, namely, that he’s stupid.’

‘Yes, certainly he’s stupid,’ said the Turkey-cock; and he gobbled.

Then the stork was quite silent, and thought of his Africa.

‘Those are wonderful thin legs of yours,’ said the Turkey-cock. ‘Pray, how much do they cost a yard?’

‘Quack! quack! quack!’ grinned all the Ducks; but the Stork pretended not to hear it at all.



‘You may just as well laugh too,’ said the Turkey-cock to him, ‘for that was very wittily said. Or was it, perhaps, too high for you? Yes, yes, he isn’t very penetrating. Let us continue to be interesting among ourselves.’

And the Hens clucked, and the Ducks quacked, ‘Gick! gack! gick! gack!’ It was terrible how they made fun among themselves.

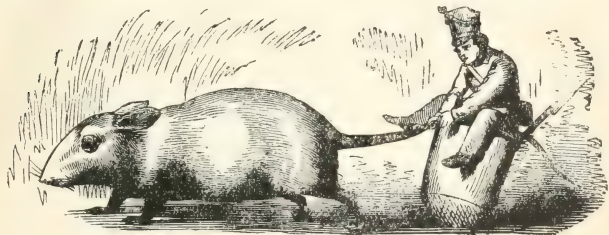
But Hjalmar went to the hencoop, opened the back door, and called to the Stork; and the Stork hopped out to him on to the deck. Now he had rested, and it seemed as if he nodded at Hjalmar, to thank him. Then he spread his wings, and flew away to the warm countries; but the Fowls clucked, and the Ducks quacked, and the Turkey-cock became fiery red in the face.

‘To-morrow we shall make soup of you,’ said Hjalmar;

and so saying he awoke, and was lying in his little bed. It was a wonderful journey that Ole Luk-Oie had caused him to take that night.

THURSDAY

‘I tell you what,’ said Ole Luk-Oie, ‘you must not be frightened. Here you shall see a little Mouse,’ and he held out his hand with the pretty little creature in it. ‘It has come to invite you to a wedding. There are two little Mice here who are going to enter into the marriage state to-night. They live under the floor of your mother’s store-closet : that is said to be a charming dwelling-place !’



‘But how can I get through the little mouse-hole in the floor ?’ asked Hjalmar.

‘Let me manage that,’ said Ole Luk-Oie. ‘I will make you small.’

And he touched Hjalmar with his magic squirt, and the boy began to shrink and shrink, until he was not so long as a finger.

‘Now you may borrow the uniform of a tin soldier : I think it would fit you, and it looks well to wear a uniform when one is in society.’

‘Yes, certainly,’ said Hjalmar.

And in a moment he was dressed like the smartest of tin soldiers.

‘Will you not be kind enough to take a seat in your mamma’s thimble ?’ asked the Mouse. ‘Then I shall have the honour of drawing you.’

‘Will the young lady really take so much trouble ?’ cried Hjalmar.

And thus they drove to the mouse's wedding. First they came into a long passage beneath the boards, which was only just so high that they could drive through it in the thimble ; and the whole passage was lit up with rotten wood.

'Is there not a delicious smell here ?' observed the Mouse. 'The entire road has been greased with bacon rinds, and there can be nothing more exquisite.'

Now they came into the festive hall. On the right hand stood all the little lady mice ; and they whispered and giggled as if they were making fun of each other ; on the left stood all the gentlemen mice, stroking their whiskers with their fore paws ; and in the centre of the hall the bridegroom and bride might be seen standing in a hollow cheese rind, and kissing each other terribly before all the guests ; for of course they were engaged, and were just about to be married.

More and more strangers kept flocking in. One mouse was nearly treading another to death ; and the happy couple had stationed themselves just in the doorway, so that one could neither come in nor go out. Like the passage, the room had been greased with bacon rinds, and that was the entire banquet ; but for the dessert a pea was produced, in which a mouse belonging to the family had bitten the name of the betrothed pair—that is to say, the first letter of the name : that was something quite out of the common way.

All the mice said it was a beautiful wedding, and that the entertainment had been very agreeable. And then Hjalmar drove home again : he had really been in grand company ; but he had been obliged to shrink in, to make himself little, and to put on a tin soldier's uniform.

FRIDAY

'It is wonderful how many grown-up people there are who would be glad to have me !' said Ole Luk-Oie ; 'especially those who have done something wrong. "Good little Ole," they say to me, "we cannot close our eyes, and so we lie all night and see our evil deeds, which sit on the bedstead like ugly little goblins, and throw hot water over us ; will you not come and drive them away, so that we may have a good sleep ?"—and then they sigh deeply

—“we would really be glad to pay for it. Good night, Ole ; the money lies on the window-sill.” But I do nothing for money,’ says Ole Luk-Oie.

‘What shall we do this evening ?’ asked Hjalmar.

‘I don’t know if you care to go to another wedding to-night. It is of a different kind from that of yesterday. Your sister’s great doll, that looks like a man, and is called Hermann, is going to marry the doll Bertha. Moreover, it is the doll’s birthday, and therefore they will receive very many presents.’

‘Yes, I know that,’ replied Hjalmar. ‘Whenever the dolls want new clothes my sister lets them either keep their birthday or celebrate a wedding ; that has certainly happened a hundred times already.’

‘Yes, but to-night is the hundred and first wedding ; and when number one hundred and one is past, it is all over ; and that is why it will be so splendid. Only look !’

And Hjalmar looked at the table. There stood the little cardboard house with the windows illuminated, and in front of it all the tin soldiers were presenting arms. The bride and bridegroom sat quite thoughtful, and with good reason, on the floor, leaning against a leg of the table. And Ole Luk-Oie, dressed up in the grandmother’s black gown, married them to each other. When the ceremony was over, all the pieces of furniture struck up the following beautiful song, which the pencil had written for them. It was sung to the melody of the soldiers’ tattoo.

Let the song swell like the rushing wind,
In honour of those who this day are joined,
Although they stand here so stiff and blind,
Because they are both of a leathery kind.
Hurrah ! hurrah ! though they’re deaf and blind,
Let the song swell like the rushing wind.

And now they received presents—but they had declined to accept provisions of any kind, for they intended to live on love.

‘Shall we now go into a summer lodging, or start on a journey ?’ asked the bridegroom.

And the Swallow, who was a great traveller, and the old yard Hen, who had brought up five broods of chickens, were consulted on the subject. And the Swallow told of

the beautiful warm climes, where the grapes hung in ripe heavy clusters, where the air is mild, and the mountains glow with colours unknown here.

‘But they have not our green colewort there!’ objected the Hen. ‘I was in the country, with my children one summer. There was a sand pit, in which we could walk about and scratch; and we had the *entrée* to a garden where green colewort grew: Oh, how green it was! I cannot imagine anything more beautiful.’

‘But one cole-plant looks just like another,’ said the Swallow; ‘and the weather here is often so bad.’

‘One is accustomed to that,’ said the Hen.

‘But it is so cold here, it freezes.’

‘That is good for the coleworts!’ said the Hen. ‘Besides, it can also be warm. Did we not, four years ago, have a summer which lasted five weeks? it was so hot here that one could scarcely breathe; and then we have not all the poisonous animals that infest these warm countries of yours, and we are free from robbers. He is a villain who does not consider our country the most beautiful—he certainly does not deserve to be here!’ And then the Hen wept, and went on: ‘I have also travelled. I rode in a coop above fifty miles; and there is no pleasure at all in travelling!’

‘Yes, the Hen is a sensible woman!’ said the doll Bertha. ‘I don’t think anything either of travelling among mountains, for you only have to go up, and then down again. No, we will go into the sand pit beyond the gate, and walk about in the colewort-patch.’

And so it was settled.

SATURDAY

‘Am I to hear some stories now?’ asked little Hjalmar, as soon as Ole Luk-Oie had got him into bed.

‘This evening we have no time for that,’ replied Ole; and he spread his fine umbrella over the lad. ‘Only look at these Chinamen!’

And the whole umbrella looked like a great China dish, with blue trees and pointed bridges with little Chinamen upon them, who stood there nodding their heads.

‘We must have the whole world prettily decked out for

to-morrow morning,' said Ole, 'for that is a holiday—it is Sunday. I will go to the church steeples to see that the little church goblins are polishing the bells, that they may sound sweetly. I will go out into the field, and see if the breezes are blowing the dust from the grass and leaves; and, what is the greatest work of all, I will bring down all the stars, to polish them. I take them in my apron; but first each one must be numbered, and the holes in which they are fixed up there must be numbered likewise, so that they may be placed in the same holes again; otherwise they would not sit fast, and we should have too many shooting stars, for one after another would fall down.'

'Hark-ye! Do you know, Mr. Luk-Oie,' said an old Portrait which hung on the wall where Hjalmar slept, 'I am Hjalmar's great-grandfather. I thank you for telling the boy stories; but you must not confuse his ideas. The stars cannot be taken down and polished! The stars are world-orbs, just like our own earth, and that is just the good thing about them.'

'I thank you, old great-grandfather,' said Ole Luk-Oie, 'I thank you! You are the head of the family. You are the ancestral head; but I am older than you! I am an old heathen: the Romans and Greeks called me the Dream God. I have been in the noblest houses, and am admitted there still! I know how to act with great people and with small. Now you may tell your own story!' And Ole Luk-Oie took his umbrella, and went away.

'Well, well! May one not even give an opinion now-a-days?' grumbled the old Portrait. And Hjalmar awoke.

SUNDAY

'Good evening!' said Ole Luk-Oie; and Hjalmar nodded, and then ran and turned his great-grandfather's Portrait against the wall, that it might not interrupt them, as it had done yesterday.

'Now you must tell me stories; about the five green peas that lived in one pod, and about the cock's foot that paid court to the hen's foot, and of the darning-needle who gave herself such airs because she thought herself a sewing needle.'

'There may be too much of a good thing!' said Ole

Luk-Oie. 'You know that I prefer showing you something. I will show you my own brother. His name, like mine, is Ole Luk-Oie, but he never comes to any one more than once; and he takes him to whom he comes upon his horse, and tells him stories. He only knows two. One of these is so exceedingly beautiful that no one in the world



can imagine it, and the other so horrible and dreadful that it cannot be described.'

And then Ole Luk-Oie lifted little Hjalmar up to the window, and said,

'There you will see my brother, the other Ole Luk-Oie. They also call him Death! Do you see, he does not look so terrible as they make him in the picture-books, where he is only a skeleton. No, that is silver embroidery that

he has on his coat ; that is a splendid hussar's uniform ; a mantle of black velvet flies behind him over the horse. See how he gallops along ! ’

And Hjalmar saw how this Ole Luk-Oie rode away, and took young people as well as old upon his horse. Some of them he put before him, and some behind ; but he always asked first, ‘ How stands it with the mark-book ? ’ ‘ Well,’ they all replied. ‘ Yes, let me see it myself,’ he said. And then each one had to show him the book ; and those who had ‘ very well ’ and ‘ remarkably well ’ written in their books, were placed in front of his horse, and a lovely story was told to them ; while those who had ‘ middling ’ or ‘ tolerably well,’ had to sit up behind, and hear a very terrible story indeed. They trembled and wept, and wanted to jump off the horse, but this they could not do, for they had all, as it were, grown fast to it.

‘ But Death is a most splendid Ole Luk-Oie,’ said Hjalmar. ‘ I am not afraid of him ! ’

‘ Nor need you be,’ replied Ole Luk-Oie ; ‘ but see that you have a good mark-book ! ’

‘ Yes, that is instructive ! ’ muttered the great-grandfather's Picture. ‘ It is of some use after all giving one's opinion.’ And now he was satisfied.

You see, that is the story of Ole Luk-Oie ; and now he may tell you more himself, this evening !

THE SWINEHERD

THERE was once a poor Prince, who had a kingdom which was quite small, but still it was large enough that he could marry upon it, and that is what he wanted to do.

Now, it was certainly somewhat bold of him to say to the Emperor's daughter, 'Will you have me?' But he did venture it, for his name was famous far and wide: there were hundreds of Princesses who would have been glad to say yes; but did *she* say so? Well, we shall see.

On the grave of the Prince's father there grew a rose bush, a very beautiful rose bush. It bloomed only every fifth year, and even then it bore only a single rose, but what a rose that was! It was so sweet that whoever smelt at it forgot all sorrow and trouble. And then he had a nightingale, which could sing as if all possible melodies were collected in its little throat. This rose and this nightingale the Princess was to have, and therefore they were put into great silver cases and sent to her.

The Emperor caused the presents to be carried before him into the great hall where the Princess was playing at 'visiting' with her maids of honour (they did nothing else), and when she saw the great silver cases with the presents in them, she clapped her hands with joy.

'If it were only a little pussy-cat!' said she.

But then came out the splendid rose.

'Oh, how pretty it is made!' said all the court ladies.

'It is more than pretty,' said the Emperor, 'it is charming.'

But the Princess felt it, and then she almost began to cry.

'Fie, papa!' she said, 'it is not artificial, it's a *natural* rose!'

'Fie,' said all the court ladies, 'it's a natural one!'

'Let us first see what is in the other case before we get angry,' said the Emperor. And then the nightingale came out; it sang so beautifully that they did not at once know what to say against it.

'*Superbe ! charmant !*' said the maids of honour, for they all spoke French, the one worse than the other.

'How that bird reminds me of the late Empress's musical snuff-box,' said an old cavalier. 'Yes, it is the same tone, the same expression.'

'Yes,' said the Emperor ; and then he wept like a little child.

'I really hope it is not a natural bird,' said the Princess.

'Yes, it is a natural bird,' said they who had brought it.

'Then let the bird fly away,' said the Princess ; and she would by no means allow the Prince to come.

But the Prince was not at all dismayed. He stained his face brown and black, drew his hat down over his brows, and knocked at the door.

'Good day, Emperor,' he said : 'could I not be employed here in the castle ?'

'Well,' replied the Emperor, 'but there are so many who want places ; but let me see, I want some one who can keep the pigs, for we have many of them.'

So the Prince was appointed the Emperor's swineherd. He received a miserable small room down by the pig-sty, and here he was obliged to stay ; but all day long he sat and worked, and when it was evening he had finished a neat little pot, with bells all round it, and when the pot boiled these bells rang out prettily and played the old melody—

Oh, my darling Augustine,
All is lost, all is lost.

But the cleverest thing about the whole arrangement was, that by holding one's finger in the steam from the pot, one could at once smell what food was being cooked at every hearth in the town. That was quite a different thing from the rose.

Now the Princess came with all her maids of honour, and when she heard the melody she stood still and looked quite pleased ; for she, too, could play 'Oh, my darling Augustine.' It was the only thing she could play, but then she played it with one finger.

'Why, that is what I play !' she cried. 'He must be an educated swineherd ! Hark-ye : go down and ask the price of the instrument.'

So one of the maids of honour had to go down ; but first she put on a pair of pattens.

‘What do you want for the pot ?’ inquired the lady.

‘I want ten kisses from the Princess,’ replied the swineherd.

‘Heaven preserve us !’ exclaimed the maid of honour.

‘Well, I won’t sell it for less,’ said the swineherd.

‘Well, what did he say ?’ asked the Princess.

‘I really can’t repeat it, it is so shocking,’ replied the lady.

‘Well, you can whisper it in my ear.’ And the lady whispered it to her.—‘He is very rude,’ declared the Princess ; and she went away. But when she had gone a little way, the bells sounded so prettily—

Oh, my darling Augustine,
All is lost, all is lost.

‘Hark-ye,’ said the Princess : ‘ask him if he will take ten kisses from my maids of honour.’

‘No, thanks,’ replied the swineherd : ‘ten kisses from the Princess, or I shall keep my pot.’

‘How tiresome that is !’ cried the Princess. ‘But at least you must stand round me, so that nobody sees it.’

And the maids of honour stood round her, and spread out their dresses, and then the swineherd received ten kisses, and she received the pot.

Then there was rejoicing ! All the evening and all the day long the pot was kept boiling ; there was not a kitchen hearth in the whole town of which they did not know what it had cooked, at the shoemaker’s as well as the chamberlain’s. The ladies danced with pleasure, and clapped their hands.

‘We know who will have sweet soup and pancakes for dinner, and who has hasty pudding and cutlets ; how interesting that is !’

‘Very interesting !’ said the head lady-superintendent.

‘Yes, but keep counsel, for I’m the Emperor’s daughter.’

‘Yes, certainly,’ said all.

The swineherd, that is to say, the Prince—but of course they did not know but that he was a real swineherd—let no day pass by without doing something, and so he made

a rattle ; when any person swung this rattle, he could play all the waltzes, hops, and polkas that have been known since the creation of the world



‘ But that is *superbe* ! ’ cried the Princess, as she went past. ‘ I have never heard a finer composition. Hark-ye : go down and ask what the instrument costs ; but I give no more kisses. ’

‘ He demands a hundred kisses from the Princess, ’ said

the maid of honour who had gone down to make the inquiry.

‘I think he must be mad!’ exclaimed the Princess; and she went away; but when she had gone a little distance she stood still. ‘One must encourage art,’ she observed. ‘I am the Emperor’s daughter! Tell him he shall receive ten kisses, like last time, and he may take the rest from my maids of honour.’

‘Ah, but we don’t like to do it!’ said the maids of honour.

‘That’s all nonsense!’ retorted the Princess, ‘and if I can allow myself to be kissed, you can too; remember, I give you board and wages.’

And so the maids of honour had to go down to him again.

‘A hundred kisses from the Princess,’ said he, ‘or each shall keep his own.’

‘Stand round me,’ said she then; and all the maids of honour stood round her while he kissed the Princess.

‘What is that crowd down by the pig-sty?’ asked the Emperor, who had stepped out to the balcony. He rubbed his eyes, and put on his spectacles. ‘Why, those are the maids of honour, at their tricks, yonder; I shall have to go down to them.’

And he pulled up his slippers behind, for they were shoes that he had trodden down at heel. Gracious mercy, how he hurried! So soon as he came down in the courtyard, he went quite softly, and the maids of honour were too busy counting the kisses, and seeing fair play, to notice the Emperor. Then he stood on tiptoe.

‘What’s that?’ said he, when he saw that there was kissing going on; and he hit them on the head with his slipper, just as the swineherd was taking the eighty-sixth kiss.

‘Be off!’ said the Emperor, for he was angry.

And the Princess and the swineherd were both expelled from his dominions. So there she stood and cried, the rain streamed down, and the swineherd scolded.

‘Oh, miserable wretch that I am!’ said the Princess; ‘if I had only taken the handsome Prince! Oh, how unhappy I am!’

Then the swineherd went behind a tree, washed the stains from his face, threw away the shabby clothes, and

stepped forth in his princely attire, so handsome that the Princess was fain to bow before him.

‘I have come to this, that I despise you,’ said he. ‘You would not have an honest Prince; you did not value the rose and the nightingale, but for a plaything you kissed the swineherd, and now you have your reward.’

And then he went into his kingdom and shut the door in her face, and put the bar on. So now she might stand outside and sing—

Oh, my darling Augustine,
All is lost, all is lost.

THE NIGHTINGALE

IN China, you must know, the Emperor is a Chinaman, and all whom he has about him are Chinamen too. (It happened a good many years ago, but that’s just why it’s worth while to hear the story, before it is forgotten.) The Emperor’s palace was the most splendid in the world; it was made entirely of porcelain, very costly, but so delicate and brittle that one had to take care how one touched it. In the garden were to be seen the most wonderful flowers, and to the costliest of them silver bells were tied, which sounded, so that nobody should pass by without noticing the flowers. Yes, everything in the Emperor’s garden was admirably arranged. And it extended so far, that the gardener himself did not know where the end was. If a man went on and on, he came into a glorious forest with high trees and deep lakes. The wood extended straight down to the sea, which was blue and deep; great ships could sail in beneath the branches of the trees; and in the trees lived a Nightingale, which sang so splendidly that even the poor fisherman, who had many other things to do, stopped still and listened, when he had gone out at night to take up his nets, and heard the Nightingale.

‘How beautiful that is!’ he said; but he was obliged to attend to his business, and thus forgot the bird. But when in the next night the bird sang again, and the fisherman heard it, he exclaimed again, ‘How beautiful that is!’

From all the countries of the world travellers came to the city of the Emperor, and admired it, and the palace

and the garden, but when they heard the Nightingale, they said, 'That is the best of all!'

And the travellers told of it when they came home; and the learned men wrote many books about the town, the palace, and the garden. But they did not forget the Nightingale; that was placed highest of all; and those who were poets wrote most magnificent poems about the Nightingale in the wood by the deep lake.

The books went through all the world, and a few of them once came to the Emperor. He sat in his golden chair, and read, and read: every moment he nodded his head, for it pleased him to peruse the masterly descriptions of the city, the palace, and the garden. 'But the Nightingale is the best of all,' it stood written there.

'What's that?' exclaimed the Emperor. 'I don't know the Nightingale at all! Is there such a bird in my empire, and even in my garden? I've never heard of that. To think that I should have to learn such a thing for the first time from books!'

And hereupon he called his cavalier. This cavalier was so grand that if any one lower in rank than himself dared to speak to him, or to ask him any question, he answered nothing but 'P!'—and that meant nothing.

'There is said to be a wonderful bird here called a Nightingale!' said the Emperor. 'They say it is the best thing in all my great empire. Why have I never heard anything about it?'

'I have never heard him named,' replied the cavalier. 'He has never been introduced at court.'

'I command that he shall appear this evening, and sing before me,' said the Emperor. 'All the world knows what I possess, and I do not know it myself!'

'I have never heard him mentioned,' said the cavalier. 'I will seek for him. I will find him.'

But where was he to be found? The cavalier ran up and down all the staircases, through halls and passages, but no one among all those whom he met had heard talk of the nightingale. And the cavalier ran back to the Emperor, and said that it must be a fable invented by the writers of books.

'Your Imperial Majesty cannot believe how much is

written that is fiction, besides something that they call the black art.'

'But the book in which I read this,' said the Emperor, 'was sent to me by the high and mighty Emperor of Japan, and therefore it cannot be a falsehood. I *will* hear the Nightingale! It must be here this evening! It has my imperial favour; and if it does not come, all the court shall be trampled upon after the court has supped!'

'Tsing-pe!' said the cavalier; and again he ran up and down all the staircases, and through all the halls and corridors; and half the court ran with him, for the courtiers did not like being trampled upon.

Then there was a great inquiry after the wonderful Nightingale, which all the world knew excepting the people at court.

At last they met with a poor little girl in the kitchen, who said,

'The Nightingale? I know it well; yes, it can sing gloriously. Every evening I get leave to carry my poor sick mother the scraps from the table. She lives down by the strand, and when I get back and am tired, and rest in the wood, then I hear the Nightingale sing. And then the water comes into my eyes, and it is just as if my mother kissed me!'

'Little girl,' said the cavalier, 'I will get you a place in the kitchen, with permission to see the Emperor dine, if you will lead us to the Nightingale, for it is announced for this evening.'

So they all went out into the wood where the Nightingale was accustomed to sing; half the court went forth. When they were in the midst of their journey a cow began to low.

'Oh!' cried the court page, 'now we have it! That shows a wonderful power in so small a creature! I have certainly heard it before.'

'No, those are cows lowing!' said the little kitchen-girl. 'We are a long way from the place yet.'

Now the frogs began to croak in the marsh.

'Glorious!' said the Chinese court preacher. 'Now I hear it—it sounds just like little church bells.'

'No, those are frogs!' said the little kitchen-maid. 'But now I think we shall soon hear it.'

And then the Nightingale began to sing.

‘That is it!’ exclaimed the little girl. ‘Listen, listen! and yonder it sits.’

And she pointed to a little grey bird up in the boughs.

‘Is it possible?’ cried the cavalier. ‘I should never have thought it looked like that! How plain it looks! It must certainly have lost its colour at seeing such grand people around.’

‘Little Nightingale!’ called the little kitchen-maid, quite loudly, ‘our gracious Emperor wishes you to sing before him.’

‘With the greatest pleasure!’ replied the Nightingale, and began to sing most delightfully.

‘It sounds just like glass bells!’ said the cavalier. ‘And look at its little throat, how it’s working! It’s wonderful that we should never have heard it before. That bird will be a great success at court.’

‘Shall I sing once more before the Emperor?’ asked the Nightingale, for it thought the Emperor was present.

‘My excellent little Nightingale,’ said the cavalier, ‘I have great pleasure in inviting you to a court festival this evening, when you shall charm his Imperial Majesty with your beautiful singing.’

‘My song sounds best in the green wood!’ replied the Nightingale; still it came willingly when it heard what the Emperor wished.

The palace was festively adorned. The walls and the flooring, which were of porcelain, gleamed in the rays of thousands of golden lamps. The most glorious flowers, which could ring clearly, had been placed in the passages. There was a running to and fro, and a thorough draught, and all the bells rang so loudly that one could not hear oneself speak.

In the midst of the great hall, where the Emperor sat, a golden perch had been placed, on which the Nightingale was to sit. The whole court was there, and the little kitchen-maid had got leave to stand behind the door, as she had now received the title of a real court cook. All were in full dress, and all looked at the little grey bird, to which the Emperor nodded.

And the Nightingale sang so gloriously that the tears

came into the Emperor's eyes, and the tears ran down over his cheeks ; and then the Nightingale sang still more sweetly, so that its song went straight to the heart. The Emperor was so much pleased that he said the Nightingale should have his golden slipper to wear round its neck. But the Nightingale declined this with thanks, saying it had already received a sufficient reward.

'I have seen tears in the Emperor's eyes—that is the real treasure to me. An Emperor's tears have a peculiar power. I am rewarded enough !' And then it sang again with a sweet glorious voice.

'That's the most amiable coquetry I ever saw !' said the ladies who stood round about, and then they took water in their mouths to gurgle when any one spoke to them. They thought they should be nightingales too. And the lackeys and chambermaids reported that they were satisfied too ; and that was saying a good deal, for they are the most difficult to please. In short, the Nightingale achieved a real success.

It was now to remain at court, to have its own cage, with liberty to go out twice every day and once at night. Twelve servants were appointed when the Nightingale went out, each of whom had a silken string fastened to the bird's leg, and which they held very tight. There was really no pleasure in an excursion of that kind.

The whole city spoke of the wonderful bird, and when two people met, one said nothing but 'Nightin,' and the other said 'gale' ; and then they sighed, and understood one another. Eleven pedlars' children were named after the bird, but not one of them could sing a note.

One day the Emperor received a large parcel, on which was written 'The Nightingale.'

'There we have a new book about this celebrated bird,' said the Emperor.

But it was not a book, but a little work of art, contained in a box, an artificial nightingale, which was to sing like the natural one, and was brilliantly ornamented with diamonds, rubies, and sapphires. So soon as the artificial bird was wound up, he could sing one of the pieces that the real one sang, and then his tail moved up and down, and shone with silver and gold. Round his neck hung

a little ribbon, and on that was written, 'The Emperor of Japan's nightingale is poor compared to that of the Emperor of China.'

'That is capital !' said they all, and he who had brought the artificial bird immediately received the title, Imperial Head-Nightingale-Bringer.

'Now they must sing together ; what a duet that will be !'

And so they had to sing together ; but it did not sound very well, for the real Nightingale sang in its own way, and the artificial bird sang waltzes.

'That's not his fault,' said the playmaster ; 'he's quite perfect, and very much in my style.'

Now the artificial bird was to sing alone. He had just as much success as the real one, and then it was much handsomer to look at—it shone like bracelets and breast-pins.

Three and thirty times over did it sing the same piece, and yet was not tired. The people would gladly have heard it again, but the Emperor said that the living Nightingale ought to sing something now. But where was it ? No one had noticed that it had flown away out of the open window, back to the green wood.

'But what in all the world is this ?' said the Emperor.

And all the courtiers abused the Nightingale, and declared that it was a very ungrateful creature.

'We have the best bird, after all,' said they.

And so the artificial bird had to sing again, and that was the thirty-fourth time that they listened to the same piece. For all that they did not know it quite by heart, for it was so very difficult. And the playmaster praised the bird particularly ; yes, he declared that it was better than a nightingale, not only with regard to its plumage and the many beautiful diamonds, but inside as well.

'For you see, ladies and gentlemen, and above all, your Imperial Majesty, with a real nightingale one can never calculate what is coming, but in this artificial bird everything is settled. One can explain it ; one can open it and make people understand where the waltzes come from, how they go, and how one follows up another.'

'Those are quite our own ideas,' they all said.

And the speaker received permission to show the bird to the people on the next Sunday. The people were to hear it sing too, the Emperor commanded ; and they did hear it, and were as much pleased as if they had all got tipsy upon tea, for that 's quite the Chinese fashion ; and they all said, ' Oh ! ' and held up their forefingers and nodded. But the poor fisherman who had heard the real Nightingale, said, ' It sounds pretty enough, and the melodies resemble each other, but there 's something wanting, though I know not what ! '

The real Nightingale was banished from the country and empire. The artificial bird had its place on a silken cushion close to the Emperor's bed ; all the presents it had received, gold and precious stones, were ranged about it ; in title it had advanced to be the High Imperial Night-Singer, and in rank to number one on the left hand ; for the Emperor considered that side the most important on which the heart is placed, and even in an Emperor the heart is on the left side ; and the playmaster wrote a work of five-and-twenty volumes about the artificial bird ; it was very learned and very long, full of the most difficult Chinese words ; but yet all the people declared that they had read it and understood it, for fear of being considered stupid, and having their bodies trampled on.

So a whole year went by. The Emperor, the court, and all the other Chinese knew every little twitter in the artificial bird's song by heart. But just for that reason it pleased them best—they could sing with it themselves, and they did so. The street boys sang, ' Tsi-tsi-tsi-glug-glug ! ' and the Emperor himself sang it too. Yes, that was certainly famous.

But one evening, when the artificial bird was singing its best, and the Emperor lay in bed listening to it, something inside the bird said, ' Whizz ! ' Something cracked. ' Whir-r-r ! ' All the wheels ran round, and then the music stopped.

The Emperor immediately sprang out of bed, and caused his body physician to be called ; but what could *he* do ? Then they sent for a watchmaker, and after a good deal of talking and investigation, the bird was put into something like order ; but the watchmaker said that the bird must

be carefully treated, for the barrels were worn, and it would be impossible to put new ones in in such a manner that the music would go. There was a great lamentation ; only once in a year was it permitted to let the bird sing, and that was almost too much. But then the playmaster made a little speech, full of hard words, and said this was just as good as before—and so of course it was as good as before.

Now five years had gone by, and a real grief came upon the whole nation. The Chinese were really fond of their Emperor, and now he was ill, and could not, it was said, live much longer. Already a new Emperor had been chosen, and the people stood out in the street and asked the cavalier how their old Emperor did.

‘ P ! ’ said he, and shook his head.

Cold and pale lay the Emperor in his great gorgeous bed ; the whole court thought him dead, and each one ran to pay homage to the new ruler. The chamberlains ran out to talk it over, and the ladies’-maids had a great coffee party. All about, in all the halls and passages, cloth had been laid down so that no footstep could be heard, and therefore it was quiet there, quite quiet. But the Emperor was not dead yet : stiff and pale he lay on the gorgeous bed with the long velvet curtains and the heavy gold tassels ; high up, a window stood open, and the moon shone in upon the Emperor and the artificial bird.

The poor Emperor could scarcely breathe ; it was just as if something lay upon his chest : he opened his eyes, and then he saw that it was Death who sat upon his chest, and had put on his golden crown, and held in one hand the Emperor’s sword, and in the other his beautiful banner. And all around, from among the folds of the splendid velvet curtains, strange heads peered forth ; a few very ugly, the rest quite lovely and mild. These were all the Emperor’s bad and good deeds, that looked upon him now that Death sat upon his heart.

‘ Do you remember this ? ’ whispered one after the other, ‘ Do you remember that ? ’ and then they told him so much that the perspiration ran from his forehead.

‘ I did not know that ! ’ said the Emperor. ‘ Music ! music ! the great Chinese drum ! ’ he cried, ‘ so that I need not hear all they say ! ’

And they continued speaking, and Death nodded like a Chinaman to all they said.

‘Music ! music !’ cried the Emperor. ‘You little precious golden bird, sing, sing ! I have given you gold and costly presents ; I have even hung my golden slipper around your neck—sing now, sing !’

But the bird stood still ; no one was there to wind him up, and he could not sing without that ; but Death continued to stare at the Emperor with his great hollow eyes, and it was quiet, fearfully quiet.

Then there sounded from the window, suddenly, the most lovely song. It was the little live Nightingale, that sat outside on a spray. It had heard of the Emperor’s sad plight, and had come to sing to him of comfort and hope. And as it sang the spectres grew paler and paler ; the blood ran quicker and more quickly through the Emperor’s weak limbs ; and even Death listened, and said, ‘Go on, little Nightingale, go on !’

‘But will you give me that splendid golden sword ? Will you give me that rich banner ? Will you give me the Emperor’s crown ?’

And Death gave up each of these treasures for a song. And the Nightingale sang on and on ; and it sang of the quiet churchyard where the white roses grow, where the elder-blossom smells sweet, and where the fresh grass is moistened by the tears of survivors. Then Death felt a longing to see his garden, and floated out at the window in the form of a cold white mist.

‘Thanks ! thanks !’ said the Emperor. ‘You heavenly little bird ! I know you well. I banished you from my country and empire, and yet you have charmed away the evil faces from my couch, and banished Death from my heart ! How can I reward you ?’

‘You have rewarded me !’ replied the Nightingale. ‘I have drawn tears from your eyes, when I sang the first time—I shall never forget that. Those are the jewels that rejoice a singer’s heart. But now sleep and grow fresh and strong again. I will sing you something.’

And it sang, and the Emperor fell into a sweet slumber. Ah ! how mild and refreshing that sleep was ! The sun shone upon him through the windows, when he awoke

refreshed and restored : not one of his servants had yet returned, for they all thought he was dead ; only the Nightingale still sat beside him and sang.

‘ You must always stay with me,’ said the Emperor. ‘ You shall sing as you please ; and I’ll break the artificial bird into a thousand pieces.’

‘ Not so,’ replied the Nightingale. ‘ It did well as long as it could ; keep it as you have done till now. I cannot build my nest in the palace to dwell in it, but let me come when I feel the wish ; then I will sit in the evening on the spray yonder by the window, and sing you something, so that you may be glad and thoughtful at once. I will sing of those who are happy and of those who suffer. I will sing of the good and the evil that remains hidden round about you. The little singing bird flies far around, to the poor fisherman, to the peasant’s roof, to every one who dwells far away from you and from your court. I love your heart more than your crown, and yet the crown has an air of sanctity about it. I will come and sing to you—but one thing you must promise me.’

‘ Everything !’ said the Emperor ; and he stood there in his imperial robes, which he had put on himself, and pressed the sword which was heavy with gold to his heart.

‘ One thing I beg of you : tell no one that you have a little bird who tells you everything. Then it will go all the better.’

And the Nightingale flew away.

The servants came in to look at their dead Emperor, and—yes, there they stood, and the Emperor said ‘ Good morning !’

THE UGLY DUCKLING

It was glorious out in the country. It was summer, and the cornfields were yellow, and the oats were green ; the hay had been put up in stacks in the green meadows, and the stork went about on his long red legs, and chattered Egyptian, for this language he had learned from his mother. All around the fields and meadows were great forests, and in the midst of these forests lay deep lakes. Yes, it was

really glorious out in the country. In the midst of the sunshine there lay an old manor, surrounded by deep canals, and from the wall down to the water grew great burdocks, so high that little children could stand upright under the loftiest of them. It was just as wild there as in the deepest wood. Here sat a Duck upon her nest, for she had to hatch her young ones; but she was almost tired out before the little ones came; and then she so seldom had visitors. The other ducks liked better to swim about in the canals than to run up to sit down under a burdock, and gossip with her.

At last one egg-shell after another burst open. 'Piep! piep!' it cried, and in all the eggs there were little creatures that stuck out their heads.

'Rap! rap!' she said; and they all came rapping out as fast as they could, looking all round them under the green leaves; and the mother let them look as much as they chose, for green is good for the eyes.

'How wide the world is!' said the young ones, for they certainly had much more room now than when they were in the eggs.

'Do you think this is all the world?' asked the mother. 'That extends far across the other side of the garden, quite into the parson's field, but I have never been there yet. I hope you are all together,' she continued, and stood up. 'No, I have not all. The largest egg still lies there. How long is that to last? I am really tired of it.' And she sat down again.

'Well, how goes it?' asked an old Duck who had come to pay her a visit.

'It lasts a long time with that one egg,' said the Duck who sat there. 'It will not burst. Now, only look at the others; are they not the prettiest ducklings one could possibly see? They are all like their father: the bad fellow never comes to see me.'

'Let me see the egg which will not burst,' said the old visitor. 'Believe me, it is a turkey's egg. I was once cheated in that way, and had much anxiety and trouble with the young ones, for they are afraid of the water. I could not get them to venture in. I quacked and clucked, but it was no use. Let me see the egg. Yes, that's a

turkey's egg ! Let it lie there, and teach the other children to swim.'

'I think I will sit on it a little longer,' said the Duck. 'I've sat so long now that I can sit a few days more.'

'Just as you please,' said the old Duck ; and she went away.

At last the great egg burst. 'Piep ! piep !' said the little one, and crept forth. It was very large and very ugly. The Duck looked at it.

'It's a very large duckling,' said she ; 'none of the others look like that : can it really be a turkey chick ? Now we shall soon find it out. It must go into the water, even if I have to kick it in myself.'

The next day the weather was splendidly bright, and the sun shone on all the green burdocks. The Mother-Duck went down to the water with all her little ones. Splash, she jumped into the water. 'Quack ! quack !' she said, and one duckling after another plunged in. The water closed over their heads, but they came up in an instant, and swam capitally ; their legs went of themselves, and there they were all in the water. The ugly grey Duckling swam with them.

'No, it's not a turkey,' said she ; 'look how well it can use its legs, and how upright it holds itself. It is my own child ! On the whole it's quite pretty, if one looks at it rightly. Quack ! quack ! come with me, and I'll lead you out into the great world, and present you in the poultry-yard ; but keep close to me, so that no one may tread on you, and take care of the cat !'

And so they came into the poultry-yard. There was a terrible riot going on there, for two families were quarrelling about an eel's head, and the cat got it after all.

'See, that's how it goes in the world !' said the Mother-Duck ; and she whetted her beak, for she, too, wanted the eel's head. 'Only use your legs,' she said. 'See that you can bustle about, and bow your heads before the old Duck yonder. She's the grandest of all here ; she's of Spanish blood—that's why she's so fat ; and do you see, she has a red rag round her leg ; that's something particularly fine, and the greatest distinction a duck can enjoy : it signifies that one does not want to lose her, and that she's to be

recognized by man and beast. Shake yourselves—don't turn in your toes ; a well-brought-up duck turns its toes quite out, just like father and mother, so ! Now bend your necks and say " Rap ! " "

And they did so ; but the other ducks round about looked at them, and said quite boldly,

' Look there ! now we're to have these hanging on as if there were not enough of us already ! And—fie !—how that Duckling yonder looks ; we won't stand him ! ' And one duck flew up immediately, and bit it in the neck.

' Let it alone,' said the mother ; ' it does no harm to any one.'

' Yes, but it's too large and peculiar,' said the Duck who had bitten it ; ' and therefore it must be buffeted.'

' Those are pretty children that the mother has there,' said the old Duck with the rag round her leg. ' They're all pretty but that one ; that was a failure. I wish she could alter it.'

' That cannot be done, my lady,' replied the Mother-Duck : ' it is not pretty, but it has a really good disposition, and swims as well as any other ; I may even say it swims better. I think it will grow up pretty, and become smaller in time ; it has lain too long in the egg, and therefore is not properly shaped.' And then she pinched it in the neck, and smoothed its feathers. ' Moreover, it is a drake,' she said, ' and therefore it is not of so much consequence. I think he will be very strong : he will make his way all right.'

' The other ducklings are graceful enough,' said the old Duck. ' Make yourself at home ; and if you find an eel's head, you may bring it me.'

And now they were at home. But the poor Duckling which had crept last out of the egg, and looked so ugly, was bitten and pushed and jeered at, as much by the ducks as by the chickens.

' It is too big ! ' they all said. And the turkey-cock, who had been born with spurs, and therefore thought himself an emperor, blew himself up like a ship in full sail, and bore straight down upon it ; then he gobbled, and grew quite red in the face. The poor Duckling did not know where it should stand or walk ; it was quite melancholy

because it looked ugly, and was scoffed at by the whole yard.

So it went on the first day ; and afterwards it became worse and worse. The poor Duckling was hunted about by every one ; even its brothers and sisters were quite angry with it, and said, ' If the cat would only catch you, you ugly creature ! ' And the mother said, ' If you were only far away ! ' And the ducks bit it, and the chickens beat it, and the girl who had to feed the poultry kicked at it with her foot.

Then it ran and flew over the fence, and the little birds in the bushes flew up in fear.

' That is because I am so ugly ! ' thought the Duckling ; and it shut its eyes, but flew on farther ; thus it came out into the great moor, where the wild ducks lived. Here it lay the whole night long ; and it was weary and downcast.

Towards morning the wild ducks flew up, and looked at their new companion.

' What sort of a one are you ? ' they asked ; and the Duckling turned in every direction, and bowed as well as it could. ' You are remarkably ugly ! ' said the Wild Ducks. ' But that is very indifferent to us, so long as you do not marry into our family.'

Poor thing ! it certainly did not think of marrying, and only hoped to obtain leave to lie among the reeds and drink some of the swamp water.

Thus it lay two whole days ; then came thither two wild geese, or, properly speaking, two wild ganders. It was not long since each had crept out of an egg, and that's why they were so saucy.

' Listen, comrade,' said one of them. ' You're so ugly that I like you. Will you go with us, and become a bird of passage ? Near here, in another moor, there are a few sweet lovely wild geese, all unmarried, and all able to say " Rap ! " You've a chance of making your fortune, ugly as you are ! '

' Piff ! paff ! ' resounded through the air ; and the two ganders fell down dead in the swamp, and the water became blood-red. ' Piff ! paff ! ' it sounded again, and whole flocks of wild geese rose up from the reeds. And then there

was another report. A great hunt was going on. The hunters were lying in wait all round the moor, and some were even sitting up in the branches of the trees, which spread far over the reeds. The blue smoke rose up like clouds among the dark trees, and was wafted far away across the water; and the hunting dogs came—splash, splash!—into the swamp, and the rushes and the reeds bent down on every side. That was a fright for the poor Duckling! It turned its head, and put it under its wing; but at that moment a frightful great dog stood close by the Duckling. His tongue hung far out of his mouth and his eyes gleamed horrible and ugly; he thrust out his nose close against the Duckling, showed his sharp teeth, and—splash, splash!—on he went, without seizing it.

‘Oh, Heaven be thanked!’ sighed the Duckling. ‘I am so ugly, that even the dog does not like to bite me!’

And so it lay quite quiet, while the shots rattled through the reeds and gun after gun was fired. At last, late in the day, silence was restored; but the poor Duckling did not dare to rise up; it waited several hours before it looked round, and then hastened away out of the marsh as fast as it could. It ran on over field and meadow; there was such a storm raging that it was difficult to get from one place to another.

Towards evening the Duck came to a little miserable peasant’s hut. This hut was so dilapidated that it did not know on which side it should fall; and that’s why it remained standing. The storm whistled round the Duckling in such a way that the poor creature was obliged to sit down, to resist it; and the tempest grew worse and worse. Then the Duckling noticed that one of the hinges of the door had given way, and the door hung so slanting that the Duckling could slip through the opening into the room; and it did so.

Here lived an old woman, with her Tom Cat and her Hen. And the Tom Cat, whom she called Sonnie, could arch his back and purr, he could even give out sparks; but for that one had to stroke his fur the wrong way. The Hen had quite little short legs, and therefore she was called Chickabiddy-shortshanks; she laid good eggs, and the woman loved her as her own child.

In the morning the strange Duckling was at once noticed, and the Tom Cat began to purr, and the Hen to cluck.



‘What’s this?’ said the woman, and looked all round; but she could not see well, and therefore she thought the Duckling was a fat duck that had strayed. ‘This is a rare

prize !' she said. ' Now I shall have duck's eggs. I hope it is not a drake. We must try that.'

And so the Duckling was admitted on trial for three weeks ; but no eggs came. And the Tom Cat was master of the house, and the Hen was the lady, and always said ' We and the world ! ' for they thought they were half the world, and by far the better half. The Duckling thought one might have a different opinion, but the Hen would not allow it.

' Can you lay eggs ? ' she asked.

' No.'

' Then you'll have the goodness to hold your tongue.'

And the Tom Cat said, ' Can you curve your back, and purr, and give out sparks ? '

' No.'

' Then you cannot have any opinion of your own when sensible people are speaking.'

And the Duckling sat in a corner and was melancholy ; then the fresh air and the sunshine streamed in ; and it was seized with such a strange longing to swim on the water, that it could not help telling the Hen of it.

' What are you thinking of ? ' cried the Hen. ' You have nothing to do, that's why you have these fancies. Purr or lay eggs, and they will pass over.'

' But it is so charming to swim on the water ! ' said the Duckling, ' so refreshing to let it close above one's head, and to dive down to the bottom.'

' Yes, that must be a mighty pleasure truly,' quoth the Hen. ' I fancy you must have gone crazy. Ask the Cat about it,—he's the cleverest animal I know,—ask him if he likes to swim on the water, or to dive down : I won't speak about myself. Ask our mistress, the old woman ; no one in the world is cleverer than she. Do you think she has any desire to swim, and to let the water close above her head ? '

' You don't understand me,' said the Duckling.

' We don't understand you ? Then pray who is to understand you ? You surely don't pretend to be cleverer than the Tom Cat and the woman—I won't say anything of myself. Don't be conceited, child, and be grateful for all the kindness you have received. Did you not get into

a warm room, and have you not fallen into company from which you may learn something ? But you are a chatterer, and it is not pleasant to associate with you. You may believe me, I speak for your good. I tell you disagreeable things, and by that one may always know one's true friends ! Only take care that you learn to lay eggs, or to purr and give out sparks !'

'I think I will go out into the wide world,' said the Duckling.

'Yes, do go,' replied the Hen.

And the Duckling went away. It swam on the water, and dived, but it was slighted by every creature because of its ugliness.

Now came the autumn. The leaves in the forest turned yellow and brown ; the wind caught them so that they danced about, and up in the air it was very cold. The clouds hung low, heavy with hail and snow-flakes, and on the fence stood the raven, crying, 'Croak ! croak !' for mere cold ; yes, it was enough to make one feel cold to think of this. The poor little Duckling certainly had not a good time. One evening—the sun was just setting in his beauty—there came a whole flock of great handsome birds out of the bushes ; the duckling had never before seen anything so beautiful ; they were dazzlingly white, with long flexible necks ; they were swans. They uttered a very peculiar cry, spread forth their glorious great wings, and flew away from that cold region to warmer lands, to open lakes. They mounted so high, so high ! and the ugly little Duckling felt quite strangely as it watched them. It turned round and round in the water like a wheel, stretched out its neck towards them, and muttered such a strange loud cry as frightened itself. Oh ! it could not forget those beautiful, happy birds ; and so soon as it could see them no longer, it dived down to the very bottom, and when it came up again, it was quite beside itself. It knew not the name of those birds, and knew not whither they were flying ; but it loved them more than it had ever loved any one. It was not at all envious of them. How could it think of wishing to possess such loveliness as they had ? It would have been glad if only the ducks would have endured its company—the poor ugly creature !

And the winter grew cold, very cold ! The Duckling was forced to swim about in the water, to prevent the surface from freezing entirely ; but every night the hole in which it swam about became smaller and smaller. It froze so hard that the icy covering crackled again ; and the Duckling was obliged to use its legs continually to prevent the hole from freezing up. At last it become exhausted, and lay quite still, and thus froze fast into the ice.

Early in the morning a peasant came by, and when he saw what had happened, he took his wooden shoe, broke the ice-crust to pieces, and carried the Duckling home to his wife. Then it came to itself again. The children wanted to play with it ; but the Duckling thought they would do it an injury, and in its terror fluttered up into the milk-pan, so that the milk spurted down into the room. The woman screamed and clapped her hands, at which the Duckling flew down into the butter-tub, and then into the meal-barrel and out again. How it looked then ! The woman screamed, and struck at it with the fire-tongs ; the children tumbled over one another, in their efforts to catch the Duckling ; and they laughed and screamed finely ! Happily the door stood open, and the poor creature was able to slip out between the shrubs into the newly-fallen snow ; and there it lay quite exhausted.

But it would be too melancholy if I were to tell all the misery and care which the Duckling had to endure in the hard winter. It lay out on the swamp among the reeds, when the sun began to shine again and the larks to sing : it was a beautiful spring.

Then all at once the Duckling raised its wings : they beat the air more strongly than before, and bore it strongly away ; and before it well knew how all this happened, it found itself in a great garden, where the apple trees stood in blossom, where the lilac flowers smelt sweet, and hung their long green branches down to the winding canals. Oh, here it was so beautiful, such a gladness of spring ! and from the thicket came three glorious white swans ; they rustled their wings, and swam lightly on the water. The Duckling knew the splendid creatures, and felt oppressed by a peculiar sadness.

‘ I will fly away to them, to the royal birds ! and they

will kill me, because I, that am so ugly, dare to approach them. But it is of no consequence ! Better to be killed by *them* than to be pursued by ducks, and beaten by fowls, and pushed about by the girl who takes care of the poultry-yard, and to suffer hunger in winter !' And it flew out into the water, and swam towards the beautiful swans : these looked at it, and came sailing down upon it with outspread wings. ' Kill me !' said the poor creature, and bent its head down upon the water, expecting nothing but death. But what was this that it saw in the clear



water ? It beheld its own image ; and, lo ! it was no longer a clumsy dark grey bird, ugly and hateful to look at, but—a swan !

It matters nothing if one is born in a duck-yard, if one has only lain in a swan's egg.

It felt quite glad at all the need and misfortune it had suffered, now it realized its happiness and all the splendour that surrounded it. And the great swans swam round it, and stroked it with their beaks.

Into the garden came little children, who threw bread and corn into the water ; and the youngest cried, ' There is a new one !' and the other children shouted joyously, ' Yes, a new one has arrived !' And they clapped their hands and danced about, and ran to their father and

mother ; and bread and cake were thrown into the water ; and they all said, ' The new one is the most beautiful of all ! so young and handsome ! ' and the old swans bowed their heads before him.

Then he felt quite ashamed, and hid his head under his wings, for he did not know what to do ; he was so happy, and yet not at all proud. He thought how he had been persecuted and despised ; and now he heard them saying that he was the most beautiful of all birds. Even the elder-tree bent its branches straight down into the water before him, and the sun shone warm and mild. Then his wings rustled, he lifted his slender neck, and cried rejoicingly from the depths of his heart,

' I never dreamed of so much happiness when I was still the ugly Duckling ! '

THE FIR TREE

OUT in the forest stood a pretty little Fir Tree. It had a good place ; it could have sunlight, air there was in plenty, and all around grew many larger comrades—pines as well as firs. But the little Fir Tree was in such a hurry to grow. It did not care for the warm sun and the fresh air ; it took no notice of the peasant children, who went about talking together, when they had come out to look for strawberries and raspberries. Often they came with a whole pot-full, or had strung berries on a straw ; then they would sit down by the little Fir Tree and say, ' How pretty and small that one is ! ' and the Tree did not like to hear that at all.

Next year it had grown a great joint, and the following year it was longer still, for in fir trees one can always tell by the number of joints they have how many years they have been growing.

' Oh, if I were only as great a tree as the others ! ' sighed the little Fir, ' then I would spread my branches far around, and look out from my crown into the wide world. The birds would then build nests in my boughs, and when the wind blew I could nod just as grandly as the others yonder.'

It took no pleasure in the sunshine, in the birds, and in the red clouds that went sailing over it morning and evening.

When it was winter, and the snow lay all around, white and sparkling, a hare would often come jumping along, and spring right over the little Fir Tree. Oh! this made it so angry. But two winters went by, and when the third came the little Tree had grown so tall that the hare was obliged to run round it.

‘Oh! to grow, to grow, and become old; that’s the only fine thing in the world,’ thought the Tree.

In the autumn woodcutters always came and felled a few of the largest trees; that happened every year, and the little Fir Tree, that was now quite well grown, shuddered with fear, for the great stately trees fell to the ground with a crash, and their branches were cut off, so that the trees looked quite naked, long, and slender—they could hardly be recognized. But then they were laid upon wagons, and horses dragged them away out of the wood. Where were they going? What destiny awaited them?

In the spring, when the Swallows and the Stork came, the Tree asked them, ‘Do you know where they were taken? Did you not meet them?’

The Swallows knew nothing about it, but the Stork looked thoughtful, nodded his head, and said,

‘Yes, I think so. I met many new ships when I flew out of Egypt; on the ships were stately masts; I fancy that these were the trees. They smelt like fir. I can assure you they’re stately—very stately.’

‘Oh that I were only big enough to go over the sea! What kind of thing is this sea, and how does it look?’

‘It would take too long to explain all that,’ said the Stork, and he went away.

‘Rejoice in thy youth,’ said the Sunbeams; ‘rejoice in thy fresh growth, and in the young life that is within thee.’

And the wind kissed the Tree, and the dew wept tears upon it; but the Fir Tree did not understand that.

When Christmas-time approached, quite young trees were felled, sometimes trees which were neither so old nor so large as this Fir Tree, that never rested but always wanted to go away. These young trees, which were just the most

beautiful, kept all their branches ; they were put upon wagons, and horses dragged them away out of the wood.

‘Where are they all going ?’ asked the Fir Tree. ‘They are not greater than I—indeed, one of them was much smaller. Why do they keep all their branches ? Whither are they taken ?’

‘We know that ! We know that !’ chirped the Sparrows. ‘Yonder in the town we looked in at the windows. We know where they go. Oh ! they are dressed up in the greatest pomp and splendour that can be imagined. We have looked in at the windows, and have perceived that they are planted in the middle of the warm room, and adorned with the most beautiful things—gilt apples, honey-cakes, playthings, and many hundreds of candles.’

‘And then ?’ asked the Fir Tree, and trembled through all its branches. ‘And then ? What happens then ?’

‘Why, we have not seen anything more. But it was incomparable.’

‘Perhaps I may be destined to tread this glorious path one day !’ cried the Fir Tree rejoicingly. ‘That is even better than travelling across the sea. How painfully I long for it ! If it were only Christmas now ! Now I am great and grown up, like the rest who were led away last year. Oh, if I were only on the carriage ! If I were only in the warm room, among all the pomp and splendour ! And then ? Yes, then something even better will come, something far more charming, or else why should they adorn me so ? There must be something grander, something greater still to come but what ? Oh ! I’m suffering, I’m longing ! I don’t know myself what is the matter with me !’

‘Rejoice in us,’ said Air and Sunshine. ‘Rejoice in thy fresh youth here in the woodland.’

But the Fir Tree did not rejoice at all, but it grew and grew ; winter and summer it stood there, green, dark green. The people who saw it said, ‘That’s a handsome tree !’ and at Christmas-time it was felled before any one of the others. The axe cut deep into its marrow, and the Tree fell to the ground with a sigh : it felt a pain, a sensation of faintness, and could not think at all of happiness, for it was sad at parting from its home, from the place where

it had grown up : it knew that it should never again see the dear old companions, the little bushes and flowers all around—perhaps not even the birds. The parting was not at all agreeable.

The Tree only came to itself when it was unloaded in a yard, with other trees, and heard a man say,

‘ This one is famous ; we only want this one ! ’

Now two servants came in gay liveries, and carried the Fir Tree into a large beautiful saloon. All around the walls hung pictures, and by the great stove stood large Chinese vases with lions on the covers ; there were rocking-chairs, silken sofas, great tables covered with picture-books, and toys worth a hundred times a hundred dollars, at least the children said so. And the Fir Tree was put into a great tub filled with sand ; but no one could see that it was a tub, for it was hung round with green cloth, and stood on a large many-coloured carpet. Oh, how the Tree trembled ! What was to happen now ? The servants, and the young ladies also, decked it out. On one branch they hung little nets, cut out of coloured paper ; every net was filled with sweetmeats ; golden apples and walnuts hung down as if they grew there, and more than a hundred little candles, red, white, and blue, were fastened to the different boughs. Dolls that looked exactly like real people—the Tree had never seen such before—swung among the foliage, and high on the summit of the Tree was fixed a tinsel star. It was splendid, particularly splendid.

‘ This evening,’ said all, ‘ this evening it will shine.’

‘ Oh,’ thought the Tree, ‘ that it were evening already ! Oh that the lights may be soon lit up ! What will happen then ? I wonder if trees will come out of the forest to look at me ? Will the sparrows fly against the panes ? Shall I grow fast here, and stand adorned in summer and winter ? ’

Yes, it knew all about it. But it had a regular bark-ache from mere longing, and the bark-ache is just as bad for a Tree as the headache for a person.

At last the candles were lighted. What a brilliance, what splendour ! The Tree trembled so in all its branches that one of the candles set fire to a green twig, and it was really painful.

‘Heaven preserve us!’ cried the young ladies; and they hastily put the fire out.

Now the Tree might not even tremble. Oh, that was



terrible! It was so afraid of losing any of its ornaments, and it was quite bewildered with all the brilliance. And now the folding doors were thrown open, and a number of children rushed in as if they would have overturned the whole Tree; the older people followed more deliberately. The little ones stood quite silent, but only for a minute;

then they shouted till the room rang : they danced gleefully round the Tree, and one present after another was plucked from it.

‘ What are they about ? ’ thought the Tree. ‘ What ’s going to be done ? ’

And the candles burned down to the twigs, and as they burned down they were extinguished, and then the children received permission to plunder the Tree. Oh ! they rushed in upon it, so that every branch cracked again : if it had not been fastened by the top and by the golden star to the ceiling, it would have fallen down.

The children danced about with their pretty toys. No one looked at the Tree except the old nursemaid, who came up and peeped among the branches, but only to see if a fig or an apple had not been forgotten.

‘ A story ! a story ! ’ shouted the children : and they drew a little fat man towards the Tree ; and he sat down just beneath it,—‘ for then we shall be in the green wood,’ said he, ‘ and the tree may have the advantage of listening to my tale. But I can only tell one. Will you hear the story of Ivede-Avede, or of Humpty-Dumpty, who fell downstairs, and still was raised up to honour and married the Princess ? ’

‘ Ivede-Avede ! ’ cried some, ‘ Humpty-Dumpty ! ’ cried others, and there was a great crying and shouting. Only the Fir Tree was quite silent, and thought, ‘ Shall I not be in it ? shall I have nothing to do in it ? ’ But it had been in the evening’s amusement, and had done what was required of it.

And the fat man told about Humpty-Dumpty, who fell downstairs, and yet was raised to honour and married the Princess. And the children clapped their hands, and cried, ‘ Tell another ! tell another ! ’ for they wanted to hear about Ivede-Avede ; but they only got the story of Humpty-Dumpty. The Fir Tree stood quite silent and thoughtful ; never had the birds in the wood told such a story as that. Humpty-Dumpty fell downstairs, and yet came to honour and married the Princess !

‘ Yes, so it happens in the world ! ’ thought the Fir Tree, and believed it must be true, because that was such a nice man who told it. ‘ Well, who can know ? Perhaps I shall

fall downstairs too, and marry a Princess ! ’ And it looked forward with pleasure to being adorned again, the next evening, with candles and toys, gold and fruit. ‘ To-morrow I shall not tremble,’ it thought. ‘ I will rejoice in all my splendour. To-morrow I shall hear the story of Humpty-Dumpty again, and, perhaps, that of Ivede-Avede too.’

And the Tree stood all night quiet and thoughtful.

In the morning the servants and the chambermaid came in.

‘ Now my splendour will begin afresh,’ thought the Tree. But they dragged it out of the room, and upstairs to the garret, and here they put it in a dark corner where no daylight shone.

‘ What ’s the meaning of this ? ’ thought the Tree. ‘ What am I to do here ? What am I to get to know here ? ’

And he leaned against the wall, and thought, and thought. And he had time enough, for days and nights went by, and nobody came up ; and when at length some one came, it was only to put some great boxes in a corner. Now the Tree stood quite hidden away, and one would think that it was quite forgotten.

‘ Now it ’s winter outside,’ thought the Tree. ‘ The earth is hard and covered with snow, and people cannot plant me ; therefore I suppose I’m to be sheltered here until spring comes. How considerate that is ! How good people are ! If it were only not so dark here, and so terribly solitary !—not even a little hare ! It was pretty out there in the wood, when the snow lay thick and the hare sprang past ; yes, even when he jumped over me, although I did not like that at the time. It is terribly lonely up here ! ’

‘ Piep ! piep ! ’ said a little Mouse, and crept forward, and then came another little one. They smelt at the Fir Tree, and then slipped among the branches.

‘ It ’s horribly cold,’ said the two little Mice, ‘ or else it would be comfortable here. Don’t you think so, you old Fir Tree ? ’

‘ I’m not old at all,’ said the Fir Tree. ‘ There are many much older than I.’

‘ Where do you come from ? ’ asked the Mice. ‘ And what do you know ? ’ They were dreadfully inquisitive. ‘ Tell us about the most beautiful spot on earth. Have

you been there ? Have you been in the store-room, where cheeses lie on the shelves, and hams hang from the ceiling, where one dances on tallow candles, and goes in thin and comes out fat ? ’

‘ I don’t know that ! ’ replied the Tree ; ‘ but I know the wood, where the sun shines, and where the birds sing.’

And then it told all about its youth.

And the little Mice had never heard anything of the kind ; and they listened and said,

‘ What a number of things you have seen ! How happy you must have been ! ’

‘ I ? ’ said the Fir Tree ; and it thought about what it had told. ‘ Yes, those were really quite happy times.’ But then it told of the Christmas-eve, when it had been hung with sweetmeats and candles.

‘ Oh ! ’ said the little Mice, ‘ how happy you have been, you old Fir Tree ! ’

‘ I’m not old at all,’ said the Tree. ‘ I only came out of the wood this winter. I’m in my very best years.’

‘ What splendid stories you can tell ! ’ said the little Mice.

And next night they came with four other little Mice, to hear what the Tree had to relate ; and the more it said, the more clearly did it remember everything, and thought, ‘ Those were quite merry days ! But they may come again. Humpty-Dumpty fell downstairs, and yet he married the Princess. Perhaps I may marry a Princess too ! ’ And then the Fir Tree thought of a pretty little birch tree that grew out in the forest : for the Fir Tree, that birch was a real Princess.

‘ Who’s Humpty-Dumpty ? ’ asked the little Mice.

And then the Fir Tree told the whole story. It could remember every single word ; and the little Mice were ready to leap to the very top of the tree with pleasure. Next night a great many more Mice came, and on Sunday two Rats even appeared ; but these thought the story was not pretty, and the little Mice were sorry for that, for now they also did not like it so much as before.

‘ Do you only know one story ? ’ asked the Rats.

‘ Only that one,’ replied the Tree. ‘ I heard that on the happiest evening of my life ; I did not think then how happy I was.’

‘That’s an exceedingly poor story. Don’t you know any about bacon and tallow candles—a store-room story?’

‘No,’ said the Tree.

‘Then we’d rather not hear you,’ said the Rats.

And they went back to their own people. The little Mice at last stayed away also; and then the Tree sighed and said,

‘It was very nice when they sat round me, the merry little Mice, and listened when I spoke to them. Now that’s past too. But I shall remember to be pleased when they take me out.’

But when did that happen? Why, it was one morning that people came and rummaged in the garret: the boxes were put away, and the Tree brought out; they certainly threw it rather roughly on the floor, but a servant dragged it away at once to the stairs, where the daylight shone.

‘Now life is beginning again!’ thought the Tree.

It felt the fresh air and the first sunbeams, and now it was out in the courtyard. Everything passed so quickly that the Tree quite forgot to look at itself, there was so much to look at all round. The courtyard was close to a garden, and here everything was blooming; the roses hung fresh and fragrant over the little paling, the linden trees were in blossom, and the swallows cried, ‘Quirre-virre-vit! my husband’s come!’ But it was not the Fir Tree that they meant.

‘Now I shall live!’ said the Tree, rejoicingly, and spread its branches far out; but, alas! they were all withered and yellow; and it lay in the corner among nettles and weeds. The tinsel star was still upon it, and shone in the bright sunshine.

In the courtyard a couple of the merry children were playing, who had danced round the tree at Christmas-time, and had rejoiced over it. One of the youngest ran up and tore off the golden star.

‘Look what is sticking to the ugly old fir tree,’ said the child, and he trod upon the branches till they cracked again under his boots.

And the Tree looked at all the blooming flowers and the splendour of the garden, and then looked at itself, and

wished it had remained in the dark corner of the garret ; it thought of its fresh youth in the wood, of the merry Christmas-eve, and of the little Mice which had listened so pleasantly to the story of Humpty-Dumpty.

‘ Past ! past ! ’ said the poor Tree. ‘ Had I but rejoiced when I could have done so ! Past ! past ! ’

And the servant came and chopped the Tree into little pieces ; a whole bundle lay there : it blazed brightly under the great brewing copper, and it sighed deeply, and each sigh was like a little shot : and the children who were at play there ran up and seated themselves at the fire, looked into it, and cried, ‘ Puff ! puff ! ’ But at each explosion, which was a deep sigh, the tree thought of a summer day in the woods, or of a winter night there, when the stars beamed ; it thought of Christmas-eve and of Humpty-Dumpty, the only story it had ever heard or knew how to tell ; and then the Tree was burned.

The boys played in the garden, and the youngest had on his breast a golden star, which the Tree had worn on its happiest evening. Now that was past, and the Tree’s life was past, and the story is past too : past ! past !—and that’s the way with all stories.

THE SNOW QUEEN

IN SEVEN STORIES

FIRST STORY

WHICH TREATS OF THE MIRROR AND FRAGMENTS

Look you, now we’re going to begin. When we are at the end of the story we shall know more than we do now, for he was a bad goblin. He was one of the very worst, for he was the devil himself. One day he was in very high spirits, for he had made a mirror which had this peculiarity, that everything good and beautiful that was reflected in it shrank together into almost nothing, but that whatever was worthless and looked ugly became prominent and looked worse than ever. The most lovely

landscapes seen in this mirror looked like boiled spinach, and the best people became hideous, or stood on their heads and had no stomachs ; their faces were so distorted as to be unrecognizable, and a single freckle was shown spread out over nose and mouth. That was very amusing, the devil said. When a good pious thought passed through any person's mind, there came a grin in the mirror, so that the devil chuckled at his artistic invention. Those who went to the goblin school—for he kept a goblin school—declared everywhere that a wonder had been wrought. For now, they asserted, one could see, for the first time, how the world and the people in it really looked. They ran about with the mirror, and at last there was not a single country or person that had not been distorted in it. Now they wanted to fly up to heaven, to sneer and scoff at the angels themselves. The higher they flew with the mirror, the more it grinned ; they could scarcely hold it fast. They flew higher and higher, and then the mirror trembled so terribly amid its grinning that it fell down out of their hands to the earth, where it was shattered into a hundred million million and more fragments. And now this mirror occasioned much more unhappiness than before ; for some of the fragments were scarcely so large as a barleycorn, and these flew about in the world, and whenever they flew into any one's eye they stuck there, and those people saw everything wrongly, or had only eyes for the bad side of a thing, for every little fragment of the mirror had retained the same power which the whole glass possessed. A few persons even got a fragment of the mirror into their hearts, and that was terrible indeed, for such a heart became a block of ice. A few fragments of the mirror were so large that they were used as window-panes, but it was a bad thing to look at one's friends through these panes ; other pieces were made into spectacles, and then it went badly when people put on these spectacles to see rightly and to be just ; and the demon laughed till his paunch shook, for it tickled him so. But without, some little fragments of glass still floated about in the air—and now we shall hear.

SECOND STORY

A LITTLE BOY AND A LITTLE GIRL

IN the great town, where there are many houses and so many people that there is not room enough for every one to have a little garden, and where consequently most persons are compelled to be content with some flowers in flower-pots, were two poor children who possessed a garden somewhat larger than a flower-pot. They were not brother and sister, but they loved each other quite as much as if they had been. Their parents lived just opposite each other in two garrets, there where the roof of one neighbour's house joined that of another ; and where the water-pipe ran between the two houses was a little window ; one had only to step across the pipe to get from one window to the other.

The parents of each child had a great box, in which grew kitchen herbs that they used, and a little rose bush ; there was one in each box, and they grew famously. Now, it occurred to the parents to place the boxes across the pipe, so that they reached from one window to another, and looked quite like two embankments of flowers. Pea plants hung down over the boxes, and the rose bushes shot forth long twigs, which clustered round the windows and bent down towards each other : it was almost like a triumphal arch of flowers and leaves. As the boxes were very high, and the children knew that they might not creep upon them, they often obtained permission to step out upon the roof behind the boxes, and to sit upon their little stools under the roses, and there they could play capitably.

In the winter there was an end of this amusement. The windows were sometimes quite frozen all over. But then they warmed copper farthings on the stove, and held the warm coins against the frozen pane ; and this made a capital peep-hole, so round, so round ! and behind it gleamed a pretty, mild eye at each window ; and these eyes belonged to the little boy and the little girl. His name was Kay and the little girl's was Gerda.

In the summer they could get to one another at one

bound ; but in the winter they had to go down and up the long staircase, while the snow was pelting without.

‘Those are the white bees swarming,’ said the old grandmother.

‘Have they a Queen-bee?’ asked the little boy. For he knew that there is one among the real bees.

‘Yes, they have one,’ replied grandmamma. She always flies where they swarm thickest. She is the largest of them all, and never remains quiet upon the earth ; she flies up again into the black cloud. Many a midnight she is flying through the streets of the town, and looks in at the windows, and then they freeze in such a strange way, and look like flowers.’

‘Yes, I’ve seen that!’ cried both the children ; and now they knew that it was true.

‘Can the Snow Queen come in here?’ asked the little girl.

‘Only let her come,’ cried the boy ; ‘I’ll set her upon the warm stove, and then she’ll melt.’

But grandmother smoothed his hair, and told some other tales.

In the evening, when little Kay was at home and half undressed, he clambered upon the chair by the window, and looked through the little hole. A few flakes of snow were falling outside, and one of them, the largest of them all, remained lying on the edge of one of the flower-boxes. The snowflake grew larger and larger, and at last became a maiden clothed in the finest white gauze, made out of millions of starry flakes. She was beautiful and delicate, but of ice—of shining, glittering ice. Yet she was alive ; her eyes flashed like two clear stars, but there was no peace or rest in them. She nodded towards the window, and beckoned with her hand. The little boy was frightened, and sprang down from the chair ; then it seemed as if a great bird flew by outside, in front of the window.

Next day there was a clear frost, then there was a thaw, and then the spring came ; the sun shone, the green sprouted forth, the swallows built nests, the windows were opened, and the little children again sat in their garden high up in the roof, over all the floors.

How splendidly the roses bloomed this summer ! The little girl had learned a psalm, in which mention was made

of roses ; and, in speaking of roses, she thought of her own ; and she sang it to the little boy, and he sang, too,—

The roses in the valleys grow
Where we the infant Christ shall know.

And the little ones held each other by the hand, kissed the



roses, looked at God's bright sunshine, and spoke to it, as if the Christ-child were there. What splendid summer days those were ! How beautiful it was without, among the fresh rose bushes, which seemed as if they would never leave off blooming !

Kay and Gerda sat and looked at the picture-book of beasts and birds. Then it was, while the clock was just striking five on the church tower, that Kay said,

‘Oh! something struck my heart and pricked me in the eye.’

The little girl fell upon his neck; he blinked his eyes. No, there was nothing at all to be seen.

‘I think it is gone,’ said he; but it was not gone. It was just one of those glass fragments which sprang from the mirror—the magic mirror that we remember well, the ugly glass that made everything great and good which was mirrored in it to seem small and mean, but in which the mean and the wicked things were brought out in relief, and every fault was noticeable at once. Poor little Kay had also received a splinter just in his heart, and that will now soon become like a lump of ice. It did not hurt him now, but the splinter was still there.

‘Why do you cry?’ he asked. ‘You look ugly like that. There’s nothing the matter with me. Oh, fie!’ he suddenly exclaimed, ‘that rose is worm-eaten, and this one is quite crooked. After all, they’re ugly roses. They’re like the box in which they stand.’

And then he kicked the box with his foot, and tore both the roses off.

‘Kay, what are you about?’ cried the little girl.

And when he noticed her fright he tore off another rose, and then sprang in at his own window, away from pretty little Gerda.

When she afterwards came with her picture-book, he said it was only fit for babies in arms; and when grandmother told stories he always came in with a *but*; and when he could manage it, he would get behind her, put on a pair of spectacles, and talk just as she did; he could do that very cleverly, and the people laughed at him. Soon he could mimic the speech and the gait of everybody in the street. Everything that was peculiar or ugly about them Kay could imitate; and people said, ‘That boy must certainly have a remarkable head.’ But it was the glass he had got in his eye, the glass that stuck deep in his heart; so it happened that he even teased little Gerda, who loved him with all her heart.

His games now became quite different from what they were before ; they became quite sensible. One winter's day when it snowed he came out with a great burning-glass, held up the blue tail of his coat, and let the snowflakes fall upon it.

‘ Now look at the glass, Gerda,’ said he.

And every flake of snow was magnified, and looked like a splendid flower, or a star with ten points : it was beautiful to behold.

‘ See how clever that is,’ said Kay. ‘ That ’s much more interesting than real flowers ; and there is not a single fault in it—they’re quite regular until they begin to melt.’

Soon after Kay came in thick gloves, and with his sledge upon his back. He called up to Gerda, ‘ I’ve got leave to go into the great square, where the other boys play,’ and he was gone.

In the great square the boldest among the boys often tied their sledges to the country people’s carts, and thus rode with them a good way. They went capitally. When they were in the midst of their playing there came a great sledge. It was painted quite white, and in it sat somebody wrapped in a rough white fur, and with a white rough cap on his head. The sledge drove twice round the square, and Kay bound his little sledge to it, and so he drove on with it. It went faster and faster, straight into the next street. The man who drove turned round and nodded in a friendly way to Kay ; it was as if they knew one another : each time when Kay wanted to cast loose his little sledge, the stranger nodded again, and then Kay remained where he was, and thus they drove out at the town gate. Then the snow began to fall so rapidly that the boy could not see a hand’s breadth before him, but still he drove on. Now he hastily dropped the cord, so as to get loose from the great sledge, but that was no use, for his sledge was fast bound to the other, and they went on like the wind. Then he called out quite loudly, but nobody heard him ; and the snow beat down, and the sledge flew onward ; every now and then it gave a jump, and they seemed to be flying over hedges and ditches. The boy was quite frightened. He wanted to say his prayers, but could remember nothing but the multiplication table.

The snowflakes became larger and larger; at last they looked like great white fowls. All at once they sprang aside and the great sledge stopped, and the person who had driven it rose up. The fur and the cap were made altogether of ice. It was a *lady*, tall and slender, and brilliantly white: it was the Snow Queen.

‘We have driven well!’ said she. ‘But why do you tremble with cold? Creep into my fur.’

And she seated him beside her in her own sledge, and wrapped the fur round him, and he felt as if he sank into a snow-drift.

‘Are you still cold?’ asked she, and then she kissed him on the forehead.

Oh, that was colder than ice; it went quite through to his heart, half of which was already a lump of ice: he felt as if he were going to die; but only for a moment; for then he seemed quite well, and he did not notice the cold all about him.

‘My sledge! don’t forget my sledge.’

That was the first thing he thought of; and it was bound fast to one of the white chickens, and this chicken flew behind him with the sledge upon its back. The Snow Queen kissed Kay again, and then he had forgotten little Gerda, his grandmother, and all at home.

‘Now you shall have no more kisses,’ said she, ‘for if you did I should kiss you to death.’

Kay looked at her. She was so beautiful, he could not imagine a more sensible or lovely face; she did not appear to him to be made of ice now as before, when she sat at the window and beckoned to him. In his eyes she was perfect; he did not feel at all afraid. He told her that he could do mental arithmetic as far as fractions, that he knew the number of square miles, and the number of inhabitants in the country. And she always smiled, and then it seemed to him that what he knew was not enough, and he looked up into the wide sky, and she flew with him high up upon the black cloud, and the storm blew and whistled; it seemed as though the wind sang old songs. They flew over woods and lakes, over sea and land: below them roared the cold wind, the wolves howled, the snow crackled; over them flew the black screaming crows;

but above all the moon shone bright and clear, and Kay looked at the long, long winter night ; by day he slept at the feet of the Queen.

THIRD STORY

THE FLOWER GARDEN OF THE WOMAN WHO COULD CONJURE

BUT how did it fare with little Gerda when Kay did not return ? What could have become of him ? No one knew, no one could give information. The boys only told that they had seen him bind his sledge to another very large one, which had driven along the street and out at the town gate. Nobody knew what had become of him ; many tears were shed, and little Gerda especially wept long and bitterly : then they said he was dead—he had been drowned in the river which flowed close by their town. Oh, those were very dark long winter days ! But now spring came, with warmer sunshine.

‘ Kay is dead and gone,’ said little Gerda.

‘ I don’t believe it,’ said the Sunshine.

‘ He is dead and gone,’ said she to the Swallows.

‘ We don’t believe it,’ they replied ; and at last little Gerda did not believe it herself.

‘ I will put on my new red shoes,’ she said one morning, ‘ those that Kay has never seen ; and then I will go down to the river, and ask for him.’

It was still very early ; she kissed the old grandmother, who was still asleep, put on her red shoes, and went quite alone out of the town gate towards the river.

‘ Is it true that you have taken away my little playmate from me ? I will give you my red shoes if you will give him back to me !’

And it seemed to her as if the waves nodded quite strangely ; and then she took her red shoes, that she liked best of anything she possessed, and threw them both into the river ; but they fell close to the shore, and the little wavelets carried them back to her, to the land. It seemed as if the river would not take from her the dearest things she possessed because it had not her little Kay ; but she

thought she had not thrown the shoes far enough out ; so she crept into a boat that lay among the reeds ; she went to the other end of the boat, and threw the shoes from thence into the water ; but the boat was not bound fast, and at the movement she made it glided away from the shore. She noticed it, and hurried to get back, but before she reached the other end the boat was a yard from the bank, and it drifted away faster than before.

Then little Gerda was very much frightened, and began to cry ; but no one heard her except the Sparrows, and they could not carry her to land ; but they flew along by the shore, and sang, as if to console her, ' Here we are ! here we are ! ' The boat drove on with the stream, and little Gerda sat quite still, with only her stockings on her feet ; her little red shoes floated along behind her, but they could not come up to the boat, for that made more way.

It was very pretty on both shores. There were beautiful flowers, old trees, and slopes with sheep and cows ; but not *one* person was to be seen.

' Perhaps the river will carry me to little Kay,' thought Gerda.

And then she became more cheerful, and rose up, and for many hours she watched the charming green banks ; then she came to a great cherry orchard, in which stood a little house with remarkable blue and red windows ; it had a thatched roof, and without stood two wooden soldiers, who presented arms to those who sailed past.

Gerda called to them, for she thought they were alive, but of course they did not answer. She came quite close to them ; the river carried the boat towards the shore.

Gerda called still louder, and then there came out of the house an old, old woman leaning on a crutch : she had on a great sun-hat, painted over with the finest flowers.

' You poor little child ! ' said the old woman, ' how did you manage to come on the great rolling river, and to float thus far out into the world ? '

And then the old woman went quite into the water, seized the boat with her crutch-stick, drew it to land, and lifted little Gerda out. And Gerda was glad to be on dry land again, though she felt a little afraid of the strange old woman.

‘Come and tell me who you are, and how you came here,’ said the old lady. And Gerda told her everything ; and the old woman shook her head, and said, ‘Hem ! hem !’ And when Gerda had told everything, and asked if she had not seen little Kay, the woman said that he had not yet come by, but that he probably would soon come. Gerda was not to be sorrowful, but to look at the flowers and taste the cherries, for they were better than any picture-book, for each one of them could tell a story. Then she took Gerda by the hand and led her into the little house, and the old woman locked the door.

The windows were very high, and the panes were red, blue, and yellow ; the daylight shone in a remarkable way, with different colours. On the table stood the finest cherries, and Gerda ate as many of them as she liked, for she had leave to do so. While she was eating them, the old lady combed her hair with a golden comb, and the hair hung in ringlets of pretty yellow round the friendly little face, which looked as blooming as a rose.

‘I have long wished for such a dear little girl as you,’ said the old lady. ‘Now you shall see how well we shall live with one another.’

And as the ancient dame combed her hair, Gerda forgot her adopted brother Kay more and more ; for this old woman could conjure, but she was not a wicked witch. She only practised a little magic for her own amusement, and wanted to keep little Gerda. Therefore she went into the garden, stretched out her crutch towards all the rose-bushes, and, beautiful as they were, they all sank into the earth, and one could not tell where they had stood. The old woman was afraid that if the little girl saw roses, she would think of her own, and remember little Kay, and run away.

Now Gerda was led out into the flower-garden. What fragrance was there, and what loveliness ! Every conceivable flower was there in full bloom ; there were some for every season : no picture-book could be gayer and prettier. Gerda jumped high for joy, and played till the sun went down behind the high cherry-trees ; then she was put into a lovely bed with red silk pillows stuffed with blue violets, and she slept there, and dreamed as gloriously as a Queen on her wedding-day.

One day she played again with the flowers in the warm sunshine ; and thus many days went by. Gerda knew every flower ; but, as many as there were of them, it still



seemed to her as if one were wanting, but which one she did not know. One day she sat looking at the old lady's hat with the painted flowers, and the prettiest of them all was a rose. The old lady had forgotten to take it out of her hat when she caused the others to disappear. But

so it always is when one does not keep one's wits about one.

'What, are there no roses here?' cried Gerda.

And she went among the beds, and searched and searched, but there was not one to be found. Then she sat down and wept: her tears fell just upon a spot where a rose-bush lay buried, and when the warm tears moistened the earth, the bush at once sprouted up as blooming as when it had sunk; and Gerda embraced it, and kissed the Roses, and thought of the beautiful roses at home, and also of little Kay.

'Oh, how I have been detained!' said the little girl. 'I wanted to seek for little Kay! Do you not know where he is?' she asked the Roses. 'Do you think he is dead?'

'He is not dead,' the Roses answered. 'We have been in the ground. All the dead people are there, but Kay is not there.'

'Thank you,' said little Gerda; and she went to the other flowers, looked into their cups, and asked, 'Do you not know where little Kay is?'

But every flower stood in the sun thinking only of her own story or fairy tale: Gerda heard many, many of them; but not one knew anything of Kay.

And what did the Tiger-Lily say?

'Do you hear the drum "Rub-dub"? There are only two notes, always "rub-dub!" Hear the morning song of the women, hear the call of the priests. The Hindoo widow stands in her long red mantle on the funeral pile; the flames rise up around her and her dead husband; but the Hindoo woman is thinking of the living one here in the circle, of him whose eyes burn hotter than flames, whose fiery glances have burned in her soul more ardently than the flames themselves, which are soon to burn her body to ashes. Can the flame of the heart die in the flame of the funeral pile?'

'I don't understand that at all!' said little Gerda.

'That's my story,' said the Lily.

What says the Convolvulus?

'Over the narrow road looms an old knightly castle: thickly the ivy grows over the crumbling red walls, leaf by leaf up to the balcony, and there stands a beautiful girl; she bends over the balustrade and looks down at

the road. No rose on its branch is fresher than she ; no apple blossom wafted onward by the wind floats more lightly along. How her costly silks rustle ! “ Comes he not yet ? ”

‘ Is it Kay whom you mean ? ’ asked little Gerda.

‘ I’m only speaking of my own story—my dream,’ replied the Convolvulus.

What said the little Snowdrop ?

‘ Between the trees a long board hangs by ropes ; that is a swing. Two pretty little girls, with clothes white as snow and long green silk ribbons on their hats, are sitting upon it, swinging ; their brother, who is greater than they, stands in the swing, and has slung his arm round the rope to hold himself, for in one hand he has a little saucer, and in the other a clay pipe ; he is blowing bubbles. The swing flies, and the bubbles rise with beautiful changing colours ; the last still hangs from the pipe-bowl, swaying in the wind. The swing flies on : the little black dog, light as the bubbles, stands up on his hind legs and wants to be taken into the swing ; it flies on, and the dog falls, barks, and grows angry, for he is teased, and the bubble bursts. A swinging board and a bursting bubble—that is my song.’

‘ It may be very pretty, what you’re telling, but you speak it so mournfully, and you don’t mention little Kay at all.’

What do the Hyacinths say ?

‘ There were three beautiful sisters, transparent and delicate. The dress of one was red, that of the second blue, and that of the third quite white ; hand in hand they danced by the calm lake in the bright moonlight. They were not elves, they were human beings. It was so sweet and fragrant there ! The girls disappeared in the forest, and the sweet fragrance became stronger : three coffins, with the three beautiful maidens lying in them, glided from the wood-thicket across the lake ; the glow-worms flew gleaming about them like little hovering lights. Are the dancing girls sleeping, or are they dead ? The flower-scent says they are dead and the evening bell tolls their knell.’

‘ You make me quite sorrowful,’ said little Gerda. ‘ You scent so strongly, I cannot help thinking of the dead maidens. Ah ! is little Kay really dead ? The roses have been down in the earth, and they say no.’

‘Kling! klang!’ tolled the Hyacinth Bells. ‘We are not tolling for little Kay—we don’t know him; we only sing our song, the only one we know.’

And Gerda went to the Buttercup, gleaming forth from the green leaves.

‘You are a little bright sun,’ said Gerda. ‘Tell me, if you know, where I may find my companion.’

And the Buttercup shone so gaily, and looked back at Gerda. What song might the Buttercup sing? It was not about Kay.

‘In a little courtyard the clear sun shone warm on the first day of spring. The sunbeams glided down the white wall of the neighbouring house; close by grew the first yellow flower, glancing like gold in the bright sun’s ray. The old grandmother sat out of doors in her chair; her granddaughter, a poor handsome maidservant, was coming home for a short visit: she kissed her grandmother. There was gold, heart’s gold, in that blessed kiss, gold in the mouth, gold in the south, gold in the morning hour. See, that’s my little story,’ said the Buttercup.

‘My poor old grandmother!’ sighed Gerda. ‘Yes, she is surely longing for me and grieving for me, just as she did for little Kay. But I shall soon go home and take Kay with me. There is no use of my asking the flowers, they only know their own song, and give me no information.’ And then she tied her little frock round her, that she might run the faster; but the Jonquil struck against her leg as she sprang over it, and she stopped to look at the tall yellow flower, and asked, ‘Do you, perhaps, know anything of little Kay?’

And she bent quite down to the flower, and what did it say?

‘I can see myself! I can see myself!’ said the Jonquil. ‘Oh! oh! how I smell! Up in the little room in the gable stands a little dancing girl: she stands sometimes on one foot, sometimes on both; she seems to tread on all the world. She’s nothing but an ocular delusion: she pours water out of a teapot on a bit of stuff—it is her bodice. “Cleanliness is a fine thing,” she says; her white frock hangs on a hook; it has been washed in the teapot too, and dried on the roof: she puts it on and ties her saffron handker-

chief round her neck, and the dress looks all the whiter. Point your toes ! look how she seems to stand on a stalk. I can see myself ! I can see myself !’

‘ I don’t care at all about that,’ said Gerda. ‘ That is nothing to tell me about.’

And then she ran to the end of the garden. The door was locked, but she pressed against the rusty lock, and it broke off, the door sprang open, and little Gerda ran with naked feet out into the wide world. She looked back three times, but no one was there to pursue her ; at last she could run no longer, and seated herself on a great stone, and when she looked round the summer was over—it was late in autumn : one could not notice that in the beautiful garden, where there was always sunshine, and the flowers of every season always bloomed.

‘ Alas ! how I have loitered !’ said little Gerda. ‘ Autumn has come. I may not rest again.’

And she rose up to go on. Oh ! how sore and tired her little feet were. All around it looked cold and bleak ; the long willow leaves were quite yellow, and the mist dropped from them like water ; one leaf after another dropped ; only the sloe-thorn still bore fruit, but the sloes were sour, and set the teeth on edge. Oh ! how grey and gloomy it looked, the wide world !

FOURTH STORY

THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS

GERDA was compelled to rest again ; then there came hopping across the snow, just opposite the spot where she was sitting, a great Crow. This Crow had long been sitting looking at her, nodding its head—now it said, ‘ Krah ! krah ! Good day ! good day !’ It could not pronounce better, but it felt friendly towards the little girl, and asked where she was going all alone in the wide world. The word ‘ alone ’ Gerda understood very well, and felt how much it expressed ; and she told the Crow the whole story of her life and fortunes, and asked if it had not seen Kay.

And the Crow nodded very gravely, and said,

‘That may be ! that may be !’

‘What, do you think so ?’ cried the little girl, and nearly pressed the Crow to death, she kissed it so.

‘Gently, gently !’ said the Crow. ‘I think I know : I believe it may be little Kay, but he has certainly forgotten you, with the Princess.’

‘Does he live with a Princess ?’ asked Gerda.

‘Yes ; listen,’ said the Crow. ‘But it’s so difficult for me to speak your language. If you know the Crows’ language, I can tell it much better.’

‘No, I never learned it,’ said Gerda ; ‘but my grandmother understood it, and could speak the language too. I only wish I had learned it.’

‘That doesn’t matter,’ said the Crow. ‘I shall tell you as well as I can.’

And then the Crow told what it knew.

‘In the country in which we now are, lives a Princess who is quite wonderfully clever, but then she has read all the newspapers in the world, and has forgotten them again, she is so clever. Lately she was sitting on the throne—and that’s not so pleasant as is generally supposed—and she began to sing a song, and it was just this, “Why should I not marry now ?” You see, there was something in that,’ said the Crow. ‘And so she wanted to marry, but she wished for a husband who could answer when he was spoken to, not one who only stood and looked handsome, for that is so tiresome. And so she had all her maids of honour summoned, and when they heard her intention they were very glad. “I like that,” said they ; “I thought the very same thing the other day.” You may be sure that every word I am telling you is true,’ added the Crow. ‘I have a tame sweetheart who goes about freely in the castle, and she told me everything.’

Of course the sweetheart was a crow, for one crow always finds out another, and birds of a feather flock together.

‘Newspapers were published directly, with a border of hearts and the Princess’s initials. One could read in them that every young man who was good-looking might come to the castle and speak with the Princess, and him who spoke so that one could hear he was at home there, and who spoke best, the Princess would choose for her husband.

Yes, yes,' said the Crow, 'you may believe me. It's as true as I sit here. Young men came flocking in; there was a great crowding and much running to and fro, but no one succeeded the first or second day. They could all speak well when they were out in the streets, but when they entered at the palace gates, and saw the guards standing in their silver lace, and went up the staircase, and saw the lackeys in their golden liveries, and the great lighted halls, they became confused. And when they stood before the throne itself, on which the Princess sat, they could do nothing but repeat the last word she had spoken, and she did not care to hear her own words again. It was just as if the people in there had taken some narcotic and fallen asleep, till they got into the street again, for not till then were they able to speak. There stood a whole row of them, from the town gate to the palace gate. I went in myself to see it,' said the Crow. 'They were hungry and thirsty, but in the palace they did not receive so much as a glass of lukewarm water. A few of the wisest had brought bread and butter with them, but they would not share with their neighbours, for they thought "Let him look hungry, and the Princess won't have him."'

'But Kay, little Kay?' asked Gerda. 'When did he come? Was he among the crowd?'

'Wait, wait! We're just coming to him. It was on the third day that there came a little personage, without horse or carriage, walking quite merrily up to the castle; his eyes sparkled like yours, he had fine long hair, but his clothes were shabby.'

'That was Kay!' cried Gerda, rejoicingly. 'Oh, then I have found him!' And she clapped her hands.

'He had a little knapsack on his back' observed the Crow.

'No, that must certainly have been his sledge,' said Gerda, 'for he went away with a sledge.'

'That may well be,' said the Crow, 'for I did not look to it very closely. But this much I know from my tame sweetheart, that when he passed under the palace gate and saw the Life Guards in silver, and mounted the staircase and saw the lackeys in gold, he was not in the least embarrassed. He nodded, and said to them, "It must be

tedious work standing on the stairs—I'd rather go in." The halls shone full of lights ; privy councillors and Excellencies walked about with bare feet, and carried golden vessels ; any one might have become solemn ; and his boots creaked most noisily, but he was not embarrassed.'

'That is certainly Kay !' cried Gerda. 'He had new boots on ; I've heard them creak in grandmother's room.'

'Yes, certainly they creaked,' resumed the Crow. 'And he went boldly in to the Princess herself, who sat on a pearl that was as big as a spinning-wheel ; and all the maids of honour with their attendants, and the attendants' attendants, and all the cavaliers with their followers, and the followers of their followers, who themselves kept a page apiece, were standing round ; and the nearer they stood to the door, the prouder they looked. The followers' followers' pages, who always went in slippers, could hardly be looked at, so proudly did they stand in the doorway !'

'That must be terrible !' faltered little Gerda. 'And yet Kay won the Princess ?'

'If I had not been a crow, I would have married her myself, notwithstanding that I am engaged. They say he spoke as well as I can when I speak the crows' language ; I heard that from my tame sweetheart. He was merry and agreeable ; he had not come to woo, but only to hear the wisdom of the Princess ; and he approved of her, and she of him.'

'Yes, certainly that was Kay !' said Gerda. 'He was so clever, he could do mental arithmetic up to fractions. Oh ! won't you lead me to the castle too ?'

'That 's easily said,' replied the Crow. 'But how are we to manage it ? I'll talk it over with my tame sweetheart ; she can probably advise us ; for this I must tell you—a little girl like yourself will never get leave to go quite in.'

'Yes, I shall get leave,' said Gerda. 'When Kay hears that I'm there he'll come out directly, and bring me in.'

'Wait for me yonder at the stile,' said the Crow ; and it wagged its head and flew away.

It was already late in the evening when the Crow came back.

'Rare ! rare !' it said. 'I'm to greet you kindly from

my sweetheart, and here's a little loaf for you. She took it from the kitchen. There's plenty of bread there, and you must be hungry. You can't possibly get into the palace, for you are barefoot, and the guards in silver and the lackeys in gold would not allow it. But don't cry; you shall go up. My sweetheart knows a little back staircase that leads up to the bedroom, and she knows where she can get the key.'

And they went into the garden, into the great avenue, where one leaf was falling down after another; and when the lights were extinguished in the palace one after the other, the Crow led Gerda to a back door, which stood ajar.

Oh, how Gerda's heart beat with fear and longing! It was just as if she had been going to do something wicked; and yet she only wanted to know if it was little Kay. Yes, it must be he. She thought so deeply of his clear eyes and his long hair, she could fancy she saw how he smiled as he had smiled at home when they sat among the roses. He would certainly be glad to see her; to hear what a long distance she had come for his sake; to know how sorry they had all been at home when he did not come back. Oh, what a fear and what a joy that was!

Now they were on the staircase. A little lamp was burning upon a cupboard, and in the middle of the floor stood the tame Crow turning her head on every side and looking at Gerda, who curtsied as her grandmother had taught her to do.

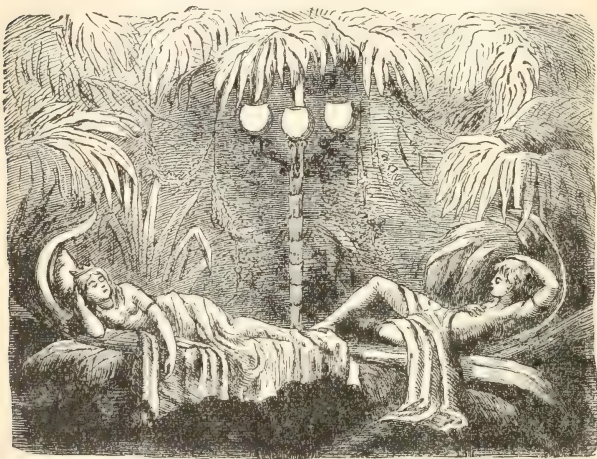
'My betrothed has spoken to me very favourably of you, my little lady,' said the tame Crow. 'Your history, as it may be called, is very moving. Will you take the lamp? then I will precede you. We will go the straight way, for we shall meet nobody.'

'I feel as if some one were coming after us,' said Gerda, as something rushed by her: it seemed like shadows on the wall; horses with flying manes and thin legs, hunters, and ladies and gentlemen on horseback.

'These are only dreams,' said the Crow; 'they are coming to carry the high masters' thoughts out hunting. That's all the better, for you may look at them the more closely, in bed. But I hope, when you come to honour and dignity, you will show a grateful heart.'

‘ Of that we may be sure ! ’ observed the Crow from the wood.

Now they came into the first hall : it was hung with rose-coloured satin, and artificial flowers were worked on the walls ; and here the dreams already came flitting by them, but they moved so quickly that Gerda could not see the high-born lords and ladies. Each hall was more splendid than the last ; yes, one could almost become



bewildered ! Now they were in the bedchamber. Here the ceiling was like a great palm-tree with leaves of glass, of costly glass, and in the middle of the floor two beds hung on a thick stalk of gold, and each of them looked like a lily. One of them was white, and in that lay the Princess ; the other was red, and in that Gerda was to seek little Kay. She bent one of the red leaves aside, and then she saw a little brown neck. Oh, that was Kay ! She called out his name quite loud, and held the lamp towards him. The dreams rushed into the room again on horseback—he awoke, turned his head, and—it was not little Kay !

The Prince was only like him in the neck ; but he was young and good-looking, and the Princess looked up, blinking, from the white lily, and asked who was there. Then little Gerda wept, and told her whole history, and all that the Crows had done for her.

‘ You poor child ! ’ said the Prince and Princess.

And they praised the Crows, and said that they were not angry with them at all, but the Crows were not to do it again. However, they should be rewarded.

‘ Will you fly out free ? ’ asked the Princess, ‘ or will you have fixed positions as court crows, with the right to everything that is left in the kitchen ? ’

And the two Crows bowed, and begged for fixed positions, for they thought of their old age, and said, ‘ It is so good to have some provisions for one’s old days,’ as they called them.

And the Prince got up out of his bed, and let Gerda sleep in it, and he could not do more than that. She folded her little hands, and thought, ‘ How good men and animals are ! ’ and then she shut her eyes and went quietly to sleep. All the dreams came flying in again, looking like angels, and they drew a little sledge, on which Kay sat nodding ; but all this was only a dream, and therefore it was gone again as soon as she awoke.

The next day she was clothed from head to foot in silk and velvet ; and an offer was made her that she should stay in the castle and enjoy pleasant times ; but she only begged for a little carriage, with a horse to draw it, and a pair of little boots ; then she would drive out into the world and seek for Kay.

And she received not only boots, but a muff likewise, and was neatly dressed ; and when she was ready to depart a coach made of pure gold stopped before the door. Upon it shone like a star the coat of arms of the Prince and Princess ; coachman, footmen, and outriders—for there were outriders too—sat on horseback with gold crowns on their heads. The Prince and Princess themselves helped her into the carriage, and wished her all good fortune. The forest Crow, who was now married, accompanied her the first three miles ; he sat by Gerda’s side, for he could not bear riding backwards : the other Crow stood in the

doorway flapping her wings ; she did not go with them, for she suffered from headache, that had come on since she had obtained a fixed position and was allowed to eat too much. The coach was lined with sugar-biscuits, and in the seat there were gingerbread-nuts and fruit.

‘ Farewell, farewell ! ’ cried the Prince and Princess ; and little Gerda wept, and the Crow wept. So they went on for the first three miles ; and then the Crow said good-bye, and that was the heaviest parting of all. The Crow flew up on a tree, and beat his black wings as long as he could see the coach, which glittered like the bright sunshine.

FIFTH STORY

THE LITTLE ROBBER GIRL

THEY drove on through the thick forest, but the coach gleamed like a torch, dazzling the robbers’ eyes, so that they could not bear it.

‘ That is gold ! that is gold ! ’ cried they, and rushed forward, and seized the horses, killed the postilions, the coachman, and the footmen, and then pulled little Gerda out of the carriage.

‘ She is fat—she is pretty—she is fed with nut-kernels ! ’ said the old robber woman, who had a very long stiff beard, and shaggy eyebrows that hung down over her eyes. ‘ She ’s as good as a little pet lamb ; how I shall relish her ! ’

And she drew out her shining knife, that gleamed in a horrible way.

‘ Oh ! ’ screamed the old woman at the same moment ; for her own daughter who hung at her back bit her ear in a very naughty and spiteful manner. ‘ You ugly brat ! ’ screamed the old woman ; and she had not time to kill Gerda.

‘ She shall play with me ! ’ said the little robber girl. ‘ She shall give me her muff and her pretty dress, and sleep with me in my bed ! ’

And then the girl gave another bite, so that the woman jumped high up, and turned right round, and all the robbers laughed, and said,

‘ Look how she dances with her calf.’

‘I want to go into the carriage,’ said the little robber girl. And she would have her own way, for she was spoiled, and very obstinate ; and she and Gerda sat in the carriage, and drove over stock and stone deep into the forest. The little robber girl was as big as Gerda, but stronger and more broad-shouldered ; and she had a brown skin ; her eyes were quite black, and they looked almost mournful. She clasped little Gerda round the waist, and said,

‘They shall not kill you as long as I am not angry with you. I suppose you are a Princess ?’

‘No,’ replied Gerda. And she told all that had happened to her, and how fond she was of little Kay.

The robber girl looked at her seriously, nodded slightly, and said,

‘They shall not kill you even if I do get angry with you, for then I will do it myself.’

And then she dried Gerda’s eyes, and put her two hands into the beautiful muff that was so soft and warm.

Now the coach stopped, and they were in the courtyard of a robber castle. It had split from the top to the bottom ; ravens and crows flew out of the great holes, and big bulldogs—each of which looked as if he could devour a man—jumped high up, but they did not bark, for that was forbidden.

In the great old smoky hall a bright fire burned upon the stone floor ; the smoke passed along under the ceiling, and had to seek an exit for itself. A great cauldron of soup was boiling and hares and rabbits were roasting on the spit.

‘You shall sleep to-night with me and all my little animals,’ said the robber girl.

They got something to eat and drink, and then went to a corner, where straw and carpets were spread out. Above these sat on laths and perches more than a hundred pigeons, that all seemed asleep, but they turned a little when the two little girls came.

‘All these belong to me,’ said the little robber girl ; and she quickly seized one of the nearest, held it by the feet, and shook it so that it flapped its wings. ‘Kiss it !’ she cried, and beat it in Gerda’s face. ‘There sit the wood rascals,’ she continued, pointing to a number of laths that had been nailed in front of a hole in the wall. ‘Those are

wood rascals, those two ; they fly away directly if one does not keep them well locked up. And here 's my old sweetheart "Ba". And she pulled out by the horn a Reindeer, that was tied up, and had a polished copper ring round its neck. 'We're obliged to keep him tight too, or he'd run away from us. Every evening I tickle his neck with a sharp knife, and he 's very frightened at that.'

And the little girl drew a long knife from a cleft in the wall, and let it glide over the Reindeer's neck ; the poor creature kicked out its legs, and the little robber girl laughed, and drew Gerda into bed with her.

'Do you keep the knife beside you while you're asleep ?' asked Gerda, and looked at it in rather a frightened way.

'I always sleep with my knife,' replied the robber girl. 'One does not know what may happen. But now tell me again what you told me just now about little Kay, and why you came out into the wide world.'

And Gerda told it again from the beginning ; and the Wood Pigeons cooed above them in their cage, and the other pigeons slept. The little robber girl put her arm round Gerda's neck, held her knife in the other hand, and slept so that one could hear her ; but Gerda could not close her eyes at all—she did not know whether she was to live or die.

The robbers sat round the fire, singing and drinking, and the old robber woman tumbled about. It was quite terrible for a little girl to behold.

Then the Wood Pigeons said, 'Coo ! coo ! we have seen little Kay. A white hen was carrying his sledge : he sat in the Snow Queen's carriage, which drove close by the forest as we lay in our nests. She blew upon us young pigeons, and all died except us two. Coo ! coo !'

'What are you saying there ?' asked Gerda. 'Whither was the Snow Queen travelling ? Do you know anything about it ?'

'She was probably journeying to Lapland, for there they have always ice and snow. Ask the Reindeer that is tied up with the cord.'

'There is ice and snow yonder, and it is glorious and fine,' said the Reindeer. 'There one may run about free in great glittering plains. There the Snow Queen has her summer

tent ; but her strong castle is up towards the North Pole, on the island that 's called Spitzbergen.'

' Oh, Kay, little Kay ! ' cried Gerda.

' You must lie still,' exclaimed the robber girl, ' or I shall thrust my knife into your body.'

In the morning Gerda told her all that the Wood Pigeons had said, and the robber girl looked quite serious, and nodded her head and said,

' That 's all the same, that 's all the same ! '

' Do you know where Lapland is ? ' she asked the Reindeer.

' Who should know better than I ? ' the creature replied, and its eyes sparkled in its head. ' I was born and bred there ; I ran about there in the snow-fields.'

' Listen ! ' said the robber girl to Gerda. ' You see all our men have gone away. Only mother is here still, and she'll stay ; but towards noon she drinks out of the big bottle, and then she sleeps for a little while ; then I'll do something for you.'

Then she sprang out of bed, and clasped her mother round the neck and pulled her beard, crying

' Good morning, my own old nanny-goat.' And her mother filliped her nose till it was red and blue ; but it was all done for pure love.

When the mother had drunk out of her bottle and had gone to sleep upon it, the robber girl went to the Reindeer, and said,

' I should like very much to tickle you a few times more with the knife, for you are very funny then ; but it 's all the same. I'll loosen your cord and help you out, so that you may run to Lapland ; but you must use your legs well, and carry this little girl to the palace of the Snow Queen, where her playfellow is. You've heard what she told me, for she spoke loud enough, and you were listening.'

The Reindeer sprang up high for joy. The robber girl lifted little Gerda on its back, and had the forethought to tie her fast, and even to give her a little cushion as a saddle.

' There are your fur boots for you,' she said, ' for it 's growing cold ; but I shall keep the muff, for that 's so

very pretty. Still, you shall not be cold, for all that : here's my mother's big mufflers—they'll just reach up to your elbows. Now your hands look just like my ugly mother's.'



And Gerda wept for joy.

'I can't bear to see you whimper,' said the little robber girl. 'No, you just ought to look very glad. And here are two loaves and a ham for you, so you won't be hungry.'

These were tied on the Reindeer's back. The little robber

girl opened the door, coaxed in all the big dogs, and then cut the rope with her sharp knife, and said to the Reindeer, 'Now run, but take good care of the little girl.'

And Gerda stretched out her hands with the big mufflers towards the little robber girl, and said, 'Farewell!'

And the Reindeer ran over stock and stone, away through the great forest, over marshes and steppes, as quick as it could go. The wolves howled and the ravens croaked. 'Hiss! hiss!' it went in the air. It seemed as if the sky were flashing fire.

'Those are my old Northern Lights,' said the Reindeer. 'Look how they glow!' And then it ran on faster than ever, day and night.

The loaves were eaten, and the ham as well, and then they were in Lapland.

SIXTH STORY

THE LAPLAND WOMAN AND THE FINLAND WOMAN

At a little hut they stopped. It was very humble; the roof sloped down almost to the ground, and the door was so low that the family had to creep on their stomachs when they wanted to go in or out. No one was in the house but an old Lapland woman, cooking fish on a train-oil lamp; and the Reindeer told Gerda's whole history, but it related its own first, for this seemed to the Reindeer the more important of the two. Gerda was so exhausted by the cold that she could not speak.

'Oh, you poor things,' said the Lapland woman, 'you've a long way to run yet! You must go more than a hundred miles into Finmark, for the Snow Queen is there, staying in the country, and burning Bengal lights every evening. I'll write a few words on a dried cod, for I have no paper, and I'll give you that as a letter to the Finland woman; she can give you better information than I.'

And when Gerda had been warmed and refreshed with food and drink, the Lapland woman wrote a few words on a dried codfish, and telling Gerda to take care of it, tied her again on the Reindeer, and the Reindeer sprang away. Flash! flash! it went high in the air; the whole

night long the most beautiful blue Northern Lights were burning.

And then they got to Finmark, and knocked at the chimney of the Finland woman, for she had not even a door.

There was such a heat in the chimney that the woman herself went about almost naked. She was little and very dirty. She at once loosened little Gerda's dress and took off the child's mufflers and boots; otherwise it would have been too hot for her to bear. Then she laid a piece of ice on the Reindeer's head, and read what was written on the codfish; she read it three times, and when she knew it by heart, she popped the fish into the soup-cauldron, for it was eatable, and she never wasted anything.

Now the Reindeer first told his own history, and then little Gerda's; and the Finland woman blinked with her clever eyes, but said nothing.

'You are very clever,' said the Reindeer: 'I know you can tie all the winds of the world together with a bit of twine: if the seaman unties one knot, he has a good wind; if he loosens the second, it blows hard; but if he unties the third and the fourth, there comes such a tempest that the forests are thrown down. Won't you give the little girl a draught, so that she may get twelve men's power, and overcome the Snow Queen?'

'Twelve men's power!' repeated the Finland woman. 'Great use that would be!'

And she went to a shelf, and brought out a great rolled-up fur, and unrolled it; wonderful characters were written upon it, and the Finland woman read until the water ran down over her forehead.

But the Reindeer again begged so hard for little Gerda, and Gerda looked at the Finland woman with such beseeching eyes full of tears, that she began to blink again with her own, and drew the Reindeer into a corner, and whispered to him, while she laid fresh ice upon his head,

'Little Kay is certainly at the Snow Queen's, and finds everything there to his taste and liking, and thinks it the best place in the world; but that is because he has a splinter of glass in his eye, and a little fragment in his heart; but these must be got out, or he will never be a human being again, and the Snow Queen will keep her power over him.'

‘But cannot you give something to little Gerda, so as to give her power over all this?’

‘I can give her no greater power than she possesses already: don’t you see how great that is? Don’t you see how men and animals are obliged to serve her, and how she gets on so well in the world, with her naked feet? She must not learn her power from us: it consists in this, that she is a dear innocent child. If she herself cannot penetrate to the Snow Queen and get the glass out of little Kay, we can be of no use! Two miles from here the Snow Queen’s garden begins; you can carry the little girl thither: set her down by the great bush that stands with its red berries in the snow. Don’t stand gossiping, but make haste, and get back here!’

And then the Finland woman lifted little Gerda on the Reindeer, which ran as fast as it could.

‘Oh, I haven’t my boots! I haven’t my mufflers!’ cried Gerda.

She soon noticed that in the cutting cold; but the Reindeer dare not stop: it ran till it came to the bush with the red berries; there it set Gerda down, and kissed her on the mouth, and great bright tears ran over the creature’s cheeks; and then it ran back, as fast as it could. There stood poor Gerda without shoes, without gloves, in the midst of the terrible cold Finmark.

She ran forward as fast as possible; then came a whole regiment of snowflakes; but they did not fall down from the sky, for that was quite bright, and shone with the Northern Lights: the snowflakes ran along the ground, and the nearer they came the larger they grew. Gerda still remembered how large and beautiful the snowflakes had appeared when she looked at them through the burning-glass. But here they were certainly far longer and much more terrible—they were alive. They were the advanced posts of the Snow Queen, and had the strangest shapes. A few looked like ugly great porcupines; others like knots formed of snakes, which stretched forth their heads; and others like little fat bears, whose hair stood on end: all were brilliantly white, all were living snowflakes.

Then little Gerda said her prayer; and the cold was so great that she could see her own breath, which went

forth out of her mouth like smoke. The breath became thicker and thicker, and formed itself into little angels, who grew and grew whenever they touched the earth; and all had helmets on their heads and shields and spears in their hands; their number increased more and more, and when Gerda had finished her prayer a whole legion stood round about her, and struck with their spears at the terrible snowflakes, so that these were shattered into a thousand pieces; and little Gerda could go forward afresh, with good courage. The angels stroked her hands and feet, and then she felt less how cold it was, and hastened on to the Snow Queen's palace.

But now we must see what Kay is doing. He certainly was not thinking of little Gerda, and least of all that she was standing in front of the palace.

SEVENTH STORY

OF THE SNOW QUEEN'S CASTLE, AND WHAT HAPPENED THERE AT LAST

THE walls of the palace were formed of the drifting snow, and the windows and doors of the cutting winds. There were more than a hundred halls, all blown together by the snow: the greatest of these extended for several miles; the strong Northern Lights illumined them all, and how great and empty, how icily cold and shining they all were! Never was merriment there, not even a little bears' ball, at which the storm could have played the music, while the bears walked about on their hind legs and showed off their pretty manners; never any little coffee gossip among the young lady white foxes. Empty, vast, and cold were the halls of the Snow Queen. The Northern Lights flamed so brightly that one could count them where they stood highest and lowest. In the midst of this immense empty snow hall was a frozen lake, which had burst into a thousand pieces; but each piece was like the rest, so that it was a perfect work of art; and in the middle of the lake sat the Snow Queen when she was at home, and then she said

that she sat in the mirror of reason, and that this was the only one, and the best in the world.

Little Kay was quite blue with cold—indeed, almost black, but he did not notice it, for she had kissed the cold shudderings away from him ; and his heart was like a lump of ice. He dragged a few sharp flat pieces of ice to and fro, joining them together in all kinds of ways, for he wanted to achieve something with them. It was just like when we have little tablets of wood, and lay them together to form figures—what we call the Chinese puzzle. Kay also went and laid figures, and, indeed, very artistic ones. That was the icy game of reason. In his eyes these figures were very remarkable and of the highest importance ; that was because of the fragment of glass sticking in his eye. He laid out the figures so that they formed a word—but he could never manage to lay down the word as he wished to have it—the word ‘Eternity’. And the Snow Queen had said,

‘If you can find out this figure, you shall be your own master, and I will give you the whole world and a new pair of skates.’

But he could not.

‘Now I’ll hasten away to the warm lands,’ said the Snow Queen. ‘I will go and look into the black pots’: these were the volcanoes, Etna and Vesuvius, as they are called. ‘I shall make them a little white ! That’s necessary ; that will do the grapes and lemons good.’

And the Snow Queen flew away, and Kay sat quite alone in the great icy hall that was miles in extent, and looked at his pieces of ice, and thought so deeply that cracks were heard inside him : he sat quite stiff and still, one would have thought that he was frozen to death.

Then it happened that little Gerda stepped through the great gate into the wide hall. Here reigned cutting winds, but she prayed a prayer, and the winds lay down as if they would have gone to sleep ; and she stepped into the great empty cold halls, and beheld Kay ; she knew him, and flew to him and embraced him, and held him fast, and called out,

‘Kay, dear little Kay ! at last I have found you !’

But he sat quite still, stiff and cold. Then little Gerda

wept hot tears, that fell upon his breast ; they penetrated into his heart, they thawed the lump of ice, and consumed the little piece of glass in it. He looked at her, and she sang :

Roses bloom and roses decay,
But we the Christ-child shall see one day.

Then Kay burst into tears ; he wept so that the splinter of glass came out of his eye. Now he recognized her, and cried rejoicingly,

‘ Gerda, dear Gerda ! where have you been all this time ? And where have I been ? ’ And he looked all around him. ‘ How cold it is here ! how large and empty ! ’

And he clung to Gerda, and she laughed and wept for joy. It was so glorious that even the pieces of ice round about danced for joy ; and when they were tired and lay down, they formed themselves just into the letters of which the Snow Queen had said that if he found them out he should be his own master, and she would give him the whole world and a new pair of skates.

And Gerda kissed his cheeks, and they became blooming ; she kissed his eyes, and they shone like her own ; she kissed his hands and feet, and he became well and merry. The Snow Queen might now come home ; his letter of release stood written in shining characters of ice.

And they took one another by the hand, and wandered forth from the great palace of ice. They spoke of the grandmother, and of the roses on the roof ; and where they went the winds rested and the sun burst forth ; and when they came to the bush with the red berries, the Reindeer was standing there waiting : it had brought another young reindeer, which gave the children warm milk, and kissed them on the mouth. Then they carried Kay and Gerda, first to the Finnish woman, where they warmed themselves thoroughly in the hot room, and received instructions for their journey home, and then to the Lapland woman, who had made their new clothes and put their sledge in order.

The Reindeer and the young one sprang at their side, and followed them as far as the boundary of the country. There the first green sprouted forth, and there they took

leave of the two reindeer and the Lapland woman. 'Farewell!' said all. And the first little birds began to twitter, the forest was decked with green buds, and out of it on a beautiful horse (which Gerda knew, for it was the same that had drawn her golden coach) a young girl came riding, with a shining red cap on her head and a pair of pistols in the holsters. This was the little robber girl, who had grown tired of staying at home, and wished to go first to the north, and if that did not suit her, to some other region. She knew Gerda at once, and Gerda knew her too; and it was a right merry meeting.

'You are a fine fellow to gad about!' she said to little Kay. 'I should like to know if you deserve that one should run to the end of the world after you?'

But Gerda patted her cheeks, and asked after the Prince and Princess.

'They've gone to foreign countries,' said the robber girl.

'But the Crow?' said Gerda.

'Why, the Crow is dead,' answered the other. 'The tame one has become a widow, and goes about with an end of black worsted thread round her leg. She complains most lamentably, but it's all talk. But now tell me how you have fared, and how you caught him.'

And Gerda and Kay told their story.

'Snip-snap-snurre-basse-lurre!' said the robber girl.

And she took them both by the hand, and promised that if she ever came through their town, she would come up and pay them a visit. And then she rode away into the wide world. But Gerda and Kay went hand in hand, and as they went it became beautiful spring, with green and with flowers. The church bells sounded, and they recognized the high steeples and the great town: it was the one in which they lived; and they went to the grandmother's door, and up the stairs, and into the room, where everything remained in its usual place. The big clock was going 'Tick! tack!' and the hands were turning; but as they went through the rooms they noticed that they had become grown-up people. The roses out on the roof gutter were blooming in at the open window, and there stood the little children's chairs, and Kay and Gerda sat each upon their own, and held each other by the hand. They had forgotten

the cold empty splendour at the Snow Queen's like a heavy dream. The grandmother was sitting in God's bright sunshine, and read aloud out of the Bible, 'Except ye become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of God.'

And Kay and Gerda looked into each other's eyes, and all at once they understood the old hymn—

Roses bloom and roses decay,
But we the Christ-child shall see one day.

There they both sat, grown up, and yet children—children in heart—and it was summer, warm, delightful summer.

THE DARNING-NEEDLE

THERE was once a Darning-Needle, who thought herself so fine, she imagined she was an embroidering-needle.

'Take care, and mind you hold me tight!' she said to the Fingers which took her out. 'Don't let me fall! If I fall on the ground I shall certainly never be found again, for I am so fine!'

'That's as it may be,' said the Fingers; and they grasped her round the body.

'See, I'm coming with a train!' said the Darning-Needle, and she drew a long thread after her, but there was no knot in the thread.

The Fingers pointed the needle just at the cook's slipper, in which the upper leather had burst, and was to be sewn together.

'That's vulgar work,' said the Darning-Needle. 'I shall never get through. I'm breaking! I'm breaking!' And she really broke. 'Did I not say so?' said the Darning-Needle; 'I'm too fine!'

'Now it's quite useless,' said the Fingers; but they were obliged to hold her fast, all the same; for the cook dropped some sealing-wax upon the needle, and pinned her handkerchief together with it in front.

'So, now I'm a breast-pin!' said the Darning-Needle. 'I knew very well that I should come to honour: when one is something, one always comes to something!'

And she laughed inwardly—for no one can ever see outwardly when a darning-needle laughs. There she sat, as proud as if she was in a state coach, and looked all about her.

‘May I be permitted to ask if you are of gold?’ she inquired of the pin, her neighbour. ‘You have a very pretty appearance, and a head of your own, but it is only little. You must see that it grows, for it’s not every one that has sealing-wax dropped upon their end.’

And the Darning-Needle drew herself up so proudly that she fell out of the handkerchief right into the sink, which the cook was rinsing out.

‘Now we’re going on a journey,’ said the Darning-Needle.—‘If only I don’t get lost!’

But she really was lost.

‘I’m too fine for this world,’ she observed, as she lay in the gutter. ‘But I know who I am, and there’s always something in that!’

So the Darning-Needle kept her proud behaviour, and did not lose her good humour. And things of many kinds swam over her, chips and straws and pieces of old newspapers.

‘Only look how they sail!’ said the Darning-Needle. ‘They don’t know what is under them! I’m here, I remain firmly here. See, there goes a chip thinking of nothing in the world but of himself—of a chip! There’s a straw going by now. How he turns! how he twirls about! Don’t think so much of yourself, you might easily run up against a stone. There swims a bit of newspaper. What’s written upon it has long been forgotten, and yet it gives itself airs. I sit quietly and patiently here. I know who I am, and I shall remain what I am.’

One day something lay close beside her that glittered splendidly; then the Darning-Needle believed that it was a diamond; but it was a Bit of broken Bottle; and because it shone, the Darning-Needle spoke to it, introducing herself as a breast-pin.

‘I suppose you are a diamond?’ she observed.

‘Why, yes, something of that kind.’

And then each believed the other to be a very valuable thing; and they began speaking about the world, and how very conceited it was.

‘I have been in a lady’s box,’ said the Darning-Needle, ‘and this lady was a cook. She had five fingers on each hand, and I never saw anything so conceited as those five fingers. And yet they were only there that they might take me out of the box and put me back into it.’

‘Were they of good birth?’ asked the Bit of Bottle.

‘No, indeed,’ replied the Darning-Needle, ‘but very haughty. There were five brothers, all of the finger family. They kept very proudly together, though they were of



different lengths : the outermost, the thumbing, was short and fat ; he walked out in front of the ranks, and only had one joint in his back, and could only make a single bow ; but he said that if he were hacked off from a man, that man was useless for service in war. Lick-pot, the second finger, thrust himself into sweet and sour, pointed to sun and moon, and he was the one who held the pen when they wrote. Longman, the third, looked over the heads of the others. Goldborder, the fourth, went about with a golden belt round his waist ; and little Peter Playman did nothing at all, and was proud of it. There was nothing but bragging among them, and therefore I went away.’

‘And now we sit here and glitter!’ said the Bit of Bottle.

At that moment more water came into the gutter, so that it overflowed, and the Bit of Bottle was carried away.

‘So, he is disposed of,’ observed the Darning-Needle. ‘I remain here, I am too fine. But that’s my pride, and my pride is honourable.’ And proudly she sat there, and had many great thoughts. ‘I could almost believe I had been born of a sunbeam, I’m so fine! It really appears to me as if the sunbeams were always seeking for me under the water. Ah! I’m so fine that my mother cannot find me. If I had my old eye, which broke off, I think I should cry; but, no, I should not do that: it’s not genteel to cry.’

One day a couple of street boys lay grubbing in the gutter, where they sometimes found old nails, farthings, and similar treasures. It was dirty work, but they took great delight in it.

‘Oh!’ cried one, who had pricked himself with the Darning-Needle, ‘there’s a fellow for you!’

‘I’m not a fellow, I’m a young lady!’ said the Darning-Needle.

But nobody listened to her. The sealing wax had come off, and she had turned black; but black makes one look slender, and she thought herself finer even than before.

‘Here comes an egg-shell sailing along!’ said the boys; and they stuck the Darning-Needle fast in the egg-shell.

‘White walls, and black myself! that looks well,’ remarked the Darning-Needle. ‘Now one can see me. I only hope I shall not be sea-sick!’ But she was not sea-sick at all. ‘It is good against sea-sickness, if one has a steel stomach, and does not forget that one is a little more than an ordinary person! Now my sea-sickness is over. The finer one is, the more one can bear.’

‘Crack!’ went the egg-shell, for a hand-barrow went over her.

‘Good heavens, how it crushes one!’ said the Darning-Needle. ‘I’m getting sea-sick now,—I’m quite sick.’

But she was not really sick, though the hand-barrow went over her; she lay there at full length, and there she may lie.

THE RED SHOES

THERE was once a little girl ; a very nice pretty little girl. But in summer she had to go barefoot, because she was poor, and in winter she wore thick wooden shoes, so that her little instep became quite red, altogether red.

In the middle of the village lived an old shoemaker's wife : she sat and sewed, as well as she could, a pair of little shoes, of old strips of red cloth ; they were clumsy enough, but well meant, and the little girl was to have them. The little girl's name was Karen.

On the day when her mother was buried she received the red shoes and wore them for the first time. They were certainly not suited for mourning ; but she had no others, and therefore thrust her little bare feet into them and walked behind the plain deal coffin.

Suddenly a great carriage came by, and in the carriage sat an old lady : she looked at the little girl and felt pity for her, and said to the clergyman,

‘ Give me the little girl, and I will provide for her.’

Karen thought this was for the sake of the shoes ; but the old lady declared they were hideous ; and they were burned. But Karen herself was clothed neatly and properly : she was taught to read and to sew, and the people said she was agreeable. But her mirror said, ‘ You are much more than agreeable ; you are beautiful.’

Once the Queen travelled through the country, and had her little daughter with her ; and the daughter was a Princess. And the people flocked towards the castle, and Karen too was among them ; and the little Princess stood in a fine white dress at a window, and let herself be gazed at. She had neither train nor golden crown, but she wore splendid red morocco shoes ; they were certainly far handsomer than those the shoemaker's wife had made for little Karen. Nothing in the world can compare with red shoes !

Now Karen was old enough to be confirmed : new clothes were made for her, and she was to have new shoes. The rich shoemaker in the town took the measure of her little feet ; this was done in his own house, in his little room, and there stood great glass cases with neat shoes and

shining boots. It had quite a charming appearance, but the old lady could not see well, and therefore took no pleasure in it. Among the shoes stood a red pair, just like those which the Princess had worn. How beautiful they were ! The shoemaker also said they had been made for a Count's child, but they had not fitted.

'That must be patent leather,' observed the old lady, 'the shoes shine so !'

'Yes, they shine !' replied Karen ; and they fitted her, and were bought. But the old lady did not know that



they were red ; for she would never have allowed Karen to go to her confirmation in red shoes ; but that is what Karen did.

Every one was looking at her shoes. And when she went up the floor of the church, towards the door of the choir, it seemed to her as if the old figures on the tombstones, the portraits of clergymen and clergymen's wives, in their stiff collars and long black garments, fixed their eyes upon her red shoes. And she thought of her shoes only, when the priest laid his hand upon her head and spoke holy words. And the organ pealed solemnly, the children sang with their fresh sweet voices, and the old precentor sang too ; but Karen thought only of her red shoes.

In the afternoon the old lady was informed by every one that the shoes were red ; and she said it was naughty and unsuitable, and that when Karen went to church in future, she should always go in black shoes, even if they were old.

Next Sunday was Sacrament Sunday. And Karen looked at the black shoes, and looked at the red ones—looked at them again—and put on the red ones.

The sun shone gloriously ; Karen and the old lady went along the footpath through the fields, and it was rather dusty.

By the church door stood an old invalid soldier with a crutch and a long beard ; the beard was rather red than white, for it was red altogether ; and he bowed down almost to the ground, and asked the old lady if he might dust her shoes. And Karen also stretched out her little foot.

‘ Look, what pretty dancing-shoes ! ’ said the old soldier. ‘ Fit so tightly when you dance ! ’

And he tapped the soles with his hand. And the old lady gave the soldier an alms, and went into the church with Karen.

And every one in the church looked at Karen’s red shoes, and all the pictures looked at them. And while Karen knelt in the church she only thought of her red shoes ; and she forgot to sing her psalm, and forgot to say her prayer.

Now all the people went out of church, and the old lady stepped into her carriage. Karen lifted up her foot to step in too ; then the old soldier said,

‘ Look, what beautiful dancing-shoes ! ’

And Karen could not resist : she was obliged to dance a few steps ; and when she once began, her legs went on dancing. It was just as though the shoes had obtained power over her. She danced round the corner of the church—she could not help it ; the coachman was obliged to run behind her and seize her : he lifted her into the carriage, but her feet went on dancing, so that she kicked the good old lady violently. At last they took off her shoes, and her legs became quiet.

At home the shoes were put away in a cupboard ; but Karen could not resist looking at them.

Now the old lady became very ill, and it was said she would not recover. She had to be nursed and waited on; and this was no one's duty so much as Karen's. But there was to be a great ball in the town, and Karen was invited. She looked at the old lady who could not recover; she looked at the red shoes, and thought there would be no harm in it. She put on the shoes, and that she might very well do; but then she went to the ball and began to dance.

But when she wished to go to the right hand, the shoes danced to the left, and when she wanted to go upstairs the shoes danced downwards, down into the street and out at the town gate. She danced, and was obliged to dance, straight out into the dark wood.

There was something glistening up among the trees, and she thought it was the moon, for she saw a face. But it was the old soldier with the red beard: he sat and nodded, and said,

‘Look, what beautiful dancing-shoes!’

Then she was frightened, and wanted to throw away the red shoes; but they clung fast to her. And she tore off her stockings; but the shoes had grown fast to her feet. And she danced and was compelled to go dancing over field and meadow, in rain and sunshine, by night and by day; but it was most dreadful at night.

She danced into the open churchyard; but the dead there did not dance; they had something better to do. She wished to sit down on the poor man's grave, where the bitter tansy grows; but there was no peace nor rest for her. And when she danced towards the open church door, she saw there an angel in long white garments, with wings that reached from his shoulders to his feet; his countenance was serious and stern, and in his hand he held a sword that was broad and gleaming.

‘Thou shalt dance!’ he said—‘dance in thy red shoes, till thou art pale and cold, and till thy body shrivels to a skeleton. Thou shalt dance from door to door; and where proud, haughty children dwell, shalt thou knock, that they may hear thee, and be afraid of thee! Thou shalt dance, dance!’

‘Mercy!’ cried Karen.

But she did not hear what the angel answered, for the shoes carried her away—carried her through the gate on to the field, over stock and stone, and she was always obliged to dance.

One morning she danced past a door which she knew well. There was a sound of psalm-singing within and a coffin was carried out, adorned with flowers. Then she knew that the old lady was dead, and she felt that she was deserted by all, and condemned by the angel of God.

She danced, and was compelled to dance—to dance in the dark night. The shoes carried her on over thorn and brier ; she scratched herself till she bled ; she danced away across the heath to a little lonely house. Here she knew the executioner dwelt ; and she tapped with her fingers on the panes, and called,

‘Come out, come out ! I cannot come in, for I must dance !’

And the executioner said,

‘You probably don’t know who I am ? I cut off the bad people’s heads with my axe, and mark how my axe rings !’

‘Do not strike off my head,’ said Karen, ‘for if you do I cannot repent of my sin. But strike off my feet with the red shoes !’

And then she confessed all her sin, and the executioner cut off her feet with the red shoes ; but the shoes danced away with the little feet over the fields and into the deep forest.

And he cut her a pair of wooden feet, with crutches, and taught her a psalm, which the criminals always sing ; and she kissed the hand that had held the axe, and went away across the heath.

‘Now I have suffered pain enough for the red shoes,’ said she. ‘Now I will go into the church, that they may see me.’

And she went quickly towards the church door ; but when she came there the red shoes danced before her, so that she was frightened, and turned back.

The whole week through she was sorrowful, and wept many bitter tears ; but when Sunday came, she said,

‘Now I have suffered and striven enough ! I think

that I am just as good as many of those who sit in the church and carry their heads high.'

And then she went boldly on ; but she did not get farther than the churchyard gate before she saw the red shoes dancing along before her : then she was seized with terror, and turned back, and repented of her sin right heartily.

And she went to the parsonage, and begged to be taken



there as a servant. She promised to be industrious, and to do all she could ; she did not care for wages, and only wished to be under a roof and with good people. The clergyman's wife pitied her, and took her into her service. And she was industrious and thoughtful. Silently she sat and listened when in the evening the pastor read the Bible aloud. All the little ones were very fond of her ; but when they spoke of dress and splendour and beauty she would shake her head.

Next Sunday they all went to church, and she was asked if she wished to go too ; but she looked sadly, with tears in her eyes, at her crutches. And then the others went to hear God's Word ; but she went alone into her little room, which was only large enough to contain her bed and a chair. And here she sat with her hymn-book ; and as she read it with a pious mind, the wind bore the notes of the organ over to her from the church ; and she lifted up her face, wet with tears, and said,

‘ O Lord, help me ! ’

Then the sun shone so brightly ; and before her stood the angel in white garments, the same she had seen that night at the church door. But he no longer grasped the sharp sword : he held a green branch covered with roses ; and he touched the ceiling, and it rose up high, and wherever he touched it a golden star gleamed forth ; and he touched the walls, and they spread forth widely, and she saw the organ which was pealing its rich sounds ; and she saw the old pictures of clergymen and their wives ; and the congregation sat in the decorated seats, and sang from their hymn-books. The church had come to the poor girl in her narrow room, or her chamber had become a church. She sat in the pew with the rest of the clergyman's people ; and when they had finished the psalm, and looked up, they nodded and said,

‘ That was right, that you came here, Karen.’

‘ It was mercy ! ’ said she.

And the organ sounded its glorious notes ; and the children's voices singing in chorus sounded sweet and lovely ; the clear sunshine streamed so warm through the window upon the chair in which Karen sat ; and her heart became so filled with sunshine, peace, and joy, that it broke. Her soul flew on the sunbeams to heaven ; and there was nobody who asked after the RED SHOES.

THE SHEPHERDESS AND THE CHIMNEY-SWEEPER

HAVE you ever seen a very old wooden cupboard, quite black with age, and ornamented with carved foliage and arabesques ? Just such a cupboard stood in a parlour : it had been a legacy from the great-grandmother, and was covered from top to bottom with carved roses and tulips. There were the quaintest flourishes upon it, and from among these peered forth little stags' heads with antlers. In the middle of the cupboard door an entire figure of a man had been cut out : he was certainly ridiculous to look at, and he grinned, for you could not call it laughing : he had goat's legs, little horns on his head, and a long beard. The children in the room always called him the Billygoat-legs-Lieutenant-and-Major-General-War-Commander-Sergeant ; that was a difficult name to pronounce, and there are not many who obtain this title ; but it was something to have cut him out. And there he was ! He was always looking at the table under the mirror, for on this table stood a lovely little Shepherdess made of china. Her shoes were gilt, her dress was neatly caught up with a red rose, and besides this she had a golden hat and a shepherd's crook : she was very lovely. Close by her stood a little Chimney-Sweeper, black as a coal, but also made of porcelain : he was as clean and neat as any other man, for it was only make-believe that he was a sweep ; the china-workers might just as well have made a prince of him, if they had been so minded.

There he stood very nattily with his ladder, and with a face as white and pink as a girl's ; and that was really a fault, for he ought to have been a little black. He stood quite close to the Shepherdess : they had both been placed where they stood ; but as they had been placed there they had become engaged to each other. They suited each other well. Both were young people, both made of the same kind of china, and both equally frail.

Close to them stood another figure, three times greater than they. This was an old Chinaman, who could nod.

He was also of porcelain, and declared himself to be the grandfather of the little Shepherdess ; but he could not prove his relationship. He declared he had authority over her, and that therefore he had nodded to Mr. Billygoat-legs-Lieutenant-and-Major-General-War-Commander-Sergeant, who was wooing her for his wife.

‘ Then you will get a husband ! ’ said the old Chinaman, ‘ a man who I verily believe is made of mahogany. He can make you Billygoat-legs-Lieutenant-and-Major-General-War-Commander-Sergeantess : he has the whole cupboard full of silver plate, besides what he hoards up in secret drawers.’

‘ I won’t go into the dark cupboard ! ’ said the little Shepherdess. ‘ I have heard tell that he has eleven porcelain wives in there.’

‘ Then you may become the twelfth,’ cried the Chinaman. ‘ This night, so soon as it creaks in the old cupboard, you shall be married, as true as I am an old Chinaman ! ’

And with that he nodded his head and fell asleep. But the little Shepherdess wept and looked at her heart’s beloved, the porcelain Chimney-Sweeper.

‘ I should like to beg of you,’ said she, ‘ to go out with me into the wide world, for we cannot remain here.’

‘ I’ll do whatever you like,’ replied the little Chimney-Sweeper. ‘ Let us start directly ! I think I can keep you by exercising my profession.’

‘ If we were only safely down from the table ! ’ said she. ‘ I shall not be happy until we are out in the wide world.’

And he comforted her, and showed her how she must place her little foot upon the carved corners and the gilded foliage down the leg of the table ; he brought his ladder, too, to help her, and they were soon together upon the floor. But when they looked up at the old cupboard there was great commotion within : all the carved stags were stretching out their heads, rearing up their antlers, and turning their necks ; and the Billygoat-legs-Lieutenant-and-Major-General-War-Commander-Sergeant sprang high in the air, and called across to the old Chinaman,

‘ Now they’re running away ! now they’re running away ! ’

Then they were a little frightened, and jumped quickly into the drawer of the window-seat. Here were three or

four packs of cards which were not complete, and a little puppet-show, which had been built up as well as it could be done. There plays were acted, and all the ladies, diamonds, clubs, hearts, and spades, sat in the first row, fanning themselves with their tulips ; and behind them stood all the knaves, showing that they had a head above and below, as is usual in playing-cards. The play was about two people who were not to be married to each other, and the Shepherdess wept, because it was just like her own history.

‘I cannot bear this !’ said she. ‘I must go out of the drawer.’

But when they arrived on the floor, and looked up at the table, the old Chinaman was awake and was shaking over his whole body—for below he was all one lump.

‘Now the old Chinaman’s coming !’ cried the little Shepherdess ; and she fell down upon her porcelain knee, so startled was she.

‘I have an idea,’ said the Chimney-Sweeper. ‘Shall we creep into the great *pot-pourri* vase which stands in the corner ? Then we can lie on roses and lavender, and throw salt in his eyes if he comes.’

‘That will be of no use,’ she replied. ‘Besides, I know that the old Chinaman and the *pot-pourri* vase were once engaged to each other, and a kind of liking always remains when people have stood in such a relation to each other. No, there’s nothing left for us but to go out into the wide world.’

‘Have you really courage to go into the wide world with me ?’ asked the Chimney-Sweeper. ‘Have you considered how wide the world is, and that we can never come back here again ?’

‘I have,’ replied she.

And the Chimney-Sweeper looked fondly at her, and said,

‘My way is through the chimney. If you have really courage to creep with me through the stove—through the iron fire-box as well as up the pipe, then we can get out into the chimney, and I know how to find my way through there. We’ll mount so high that they can’t catch us, and quite at the top there’s a hole that leads out into the wide world.

And he led her to the door of the stove.

‘It looks very black there,’ said she ; but still she went

with him, through the box and through the pipe, where it was pitch-dark night.

‘Now we are in the chimney,’ said he ; ‘and look, look ! up yonder a beautiful star is shining.’

And it was a real star in the sky, which shone straight down upon them, as if it would show them the way. And they clambered and crept : it was a frightful way, and terribly steep ; but he supported her and helped her up ; he held her, and showed her the best places where she could place her little porcelain feet ; and thus they reached the edge of the chimney, and upon that they sat down, for they were desperately tired, as they well might be.

The sky with all its stars was high above, and all the roofs of the town deep below them. They looked far around—far, far out into the world. The poor Shepherdess had never thought of it as it really was : she leaned her little head against the Chimney-Sweeper, then she wept so bitterly that the gold ran down off her girdle.

‘That is too much,’ she said. ‘I cannot bear that. The world is too large ! If I were only back upon the table below the mirror ! I shall never be happy until I am there again. Now I have followed you out into the wide world, you may accompany me back again if you really love me.’

And the Chimney-Sweeper spoke sensibly to her—spoke of the old Chinaman and of the Billygoat-legs-Lieutenant-and-Major-General-War-Commander-Sergeant ; but she sobbed bitterly and kissed her little Chimney-Sweeper, so that he could not help giving way to her, though it was foolish.

And so with much labour they climbed down the chimney again. And they crept through the pipe and the fire-box. That was not pleasant at all. And there they stood in the dark stove ; there they listened behind the door, to find out what was going on in the room. Then it was quite quiet : they looked in—ah ! there lay the old Chinaman in the middle of the floor ! He had fallen down from the table as he was pursuing them, and now he lay broken into three pieces ; his back had come off all in one piece, and his head had rolled into a corner. The Billygoat-legs-Lieutenant-and-Major-General-War-Commander-Sergeant stood where he had always stood, considering.

‘That is terrible!’ said the little Shepherdess. ‘The old grandfather has fallen to pieces, and it is our fault. I shall never survive it!’ And then she wrung her little hands. ‘He can be mended! he can be mended!’ said the



Chimney-Sweeper. ‘Don’t be so violent. If they glue his back together and give him a good rivet in his neck he will be as good as new, and may say many a disagreeable thing to us yet.’

‘Do you think so?’ cried she.

So they climbed back upon the table where they used to stand.

‘You see, we have come back to this,’ said the Chimney-Sweeper : ‘we might have saved ourselves all the trouble we have had.’

‘If the old grandfather were only riveted!’ said the Shepherdess. ‘I wonder if that is dear?’

And he was really riveted. The family had his back cemented, and a great rivet was passed through his neck : he was as good as new, only he could no longer nod.

‘It seems you have become proud since you fell to pieces,’ said the Billygoat-legs-Lieutenant-and-Major-General-War-Commander-Sergeant. ‘I don’t think you have any reason to give yourself such airs. Am I to have her, or am I not?’

And the Chimney-Sweeper and the little Shepherdess looked at the old Chinaman most piteously, for they were afraid he might nod. But he could not do that, and it was irksome to him to tell a stranger that he always had a rivet in his neck. And so the porcelain people remained together, and they blessed Grandfather’s rivet, and loved one another until they broke.

THE LITTLE MATCH GIRL

It was terribly cold ; it snowed and was already almost dark, and evening came on, the last evening of the year. In the cold and gloom a poor little girl, bareheaded and barefoot, was walking through the streets. When she left her own house she certainly had had slippers on ; but of what use were they ? They were very big slippers, and her mother had used them till then, so big were they. The little maid lost them as she slipped across the road, where two carriages were rattling by terribly fast. One slipper was not to be found again, and a boy had seized the other, and run away with it. He said he could use it very well as a cradle, some day when he had children of his own. So now the little girl went with her little naked feet, which were quite red and blue with the cold. In an old apron she carried a number of matches, and a bundle of them

in her hand. No one had bought anything of her all day, and no one had given her a farthing.

Shivering with cold and hunger she crept along, a picture of misery, poor little girl! The snowflakes covered her long fair hair, which fell in pretty curls over her neck; but she did not think of that now. In all the windows lights were shining, and there was a glorious smell of roast goose, for it was New Year's Eve. Yes, she thought of that!

In a corner formed by two houses, one of which projected beyond the other, she sat down, cowering. She had drawn up her little feet, but she was still colder, and she did not dare to go home, for she had sold no matches, and did not bring a farthing of money. From her father she would certainly receive a beating, and besides, it was cold at home, for they had nothing over them but a roof through which the wind whistled, though the largest rents had been stopped with straw and rags.

Her little hands were almost benumbed with the cold. Ah! a match might do her good, if she could only draw one from the bundle, and rub it against the wall, and warm her hands at it. She drew one out. R-r-atch! how it sputtered and burned! It was a warm, bright flame, like a little candle, when she held her hands over it; it was a wonderful little light! It really seemed to the little girl as if she sat before a great polished stove, with bright brass feet and a brass cover. How the fire burned! how comfortable it was! but the little flame went out, the stove vanished, and she had only the remains of the burned match in her hand.

A second was rubbed against the wall. It burned up, and when the light fell upon the wall it became transparent like a thin veil, and she could see through it into the room. On the table a snow-white cloth was spread; upon it stood a shining dinner service; the roast goose smoked gloriously, stuffed with apples and dried plums. And what was still more splendid to behold, the goose hopped down from the dish, and waddled along the floor, with a knife and fork in its breast, to the little girl. Then the match went out, and only the thick, damp, cold wall was before her. She lighted another match. Then she was sitting

under a beautiful Christmas tree ; it was greater and more ornamented than the one she had seen through the glass door last Christmas at the rich merchant's. Thousands of candles burned upon the green branches, and coloured pictures like those in the print shops looked down upon them. The little girl stretched forth her hand towards them ; then the match went out. The Christmas lights



mounted higher. She saw them now as stars in the sky : one of them fell down, forming a long line of fire.

‘Now some one is dying,’ thought the little girl, for her old grandmother, the only person who had loved her, and who was now dead, had told her that when a star fell down a soul mounted up to God.

She rubbed another match against the wall ; it became bright again, and in the brightness the old grandmother stood clear and shining, mild and lovely.

‘Grandmother !’ cried the child. ‘Oh ! take me with you ! I know you will go when the match is burned out.

You will vanish like the warm fire, the beautiful roast goose, and the great glorious Christmas tree ! ’

And she hastily rubbed the whole bundle of matches, for she wished to hold her grandmother fast. And the matches burned with such a glow that it became brighter than in the middle of the day ; grandmother had never been so large or so beautiful. She took the little girl in her arms, and both flew in brightness and joy above the earth, very, very high, and up there was neither cold, nor hunger, nor care—they were with God !

But in the corner, leaning against the wall, sat in the cold morning hours the poor girl with red cheeks and smiling mouth, frozen to death on the last evening of the Old Year. The New Year’s sun rose upon a little corpse ! The child sat there, stiff and cold, with the matches of which one bundle was burned. ‘ She wanted to warm herself,’ the people said. No one imagined what a beautiful thing she had seen, and in what glory she had gone in with her grandmother to the New Year’s joy.

THE OLD STREET LAMP

DID you ever hear the story of the old Street Lamp ? It is not so remarkably entertaining, but it may be listened to for once in a way.

It was a very honest old Lamp, that had done its work for many, many years, but which was now to be pensioned off. It hung for the last time to its post, and gave light to the street. It felt as an old dancer at the theatre, who is dancing for the last time, and who to-morrow will sit forgotten in her garret. The Lamp was in great fear about the morrow, for it knew that it was to appear in the council-house, and to be inspected by the mayor and the council, to see if it were fit for further service or not.

And then it was to be decided whether it was to show its light in future for the inhabitants of some suburb, or in the country in some manufactory : perhaps it would have to go at once into an iron foundry to be melted down. In this last case anything might be made of it ; but the question whether it would remember, in its new state, that

it had been a Street Lamp, troubled it terribly. Whatever might happen, this much was certain, that it would be separated from the watchman and his wife, whom it had got to look upon as quite belonging to its family. It became a lamp when he became a watchman. The wife was a little proud in those days. Only in the evening, when she went by, she deigned to glance at the Lamp; in the daytime never. But now, in these latter years, when all three, the watchman, his wife, and the Lamp, had grown old, the wife had also tended it, cleaned it, and provided it with oil. The two old people were thoroughly honest; never had they cheated the Lamp of a single drop of the oil provided for it.

It was the Lamp's last night in the street, and to-morrow it was to go to the council-house;—those were two dark thoughts! No wonder that it did not burn brightly. But many other thoughts passed through its brain. On what a number of events had it shone—how much it had seen! Perhaps as much as the mayor and the whole council had beheld. But it did not give utterance to these thoughts, for it was a good honest old Lamp, that would not willingly hurt any one, and least of all those in authority. Many things passed through its mind, and at times its light flashed up. In such moments it had a feeling that it, too, would be remembered.

‘There was that handsome young man—it is certainly a long while ago—he had a letter on pink paper with a gilt edge. It was so prettily written, as if by a lady's hand. Twice he read it, and kissed it, and looked up to me with eyes which said plainly, “I am the happiest of men!” Only he and I know what was written in this first letter from his true love. Yes, I remember another pair of eyes. It is wonderful how our thoughts fly about! There was a funeral procession in the street: the young beautiful lady lay in the decorated hearse, in a coffin adorned with flowers and wreaths; and a number of torches quite darkened my light. The people stood in crowds by the houses, and all followed the procession. But when the torches had passed from before my face, and I looked round, a single person stood leaning against my post, weeping. I shall never forget the mournful eyes that looked up to me!’

This and similar thoughts occupied the old Street Lantern, which shone to-night for the last time.

The sentry relieved from his post at least knows who is to succeed him, and may whisper a few words to him ; but the Lamp did not know its successor ; and yet it might have given a few useful hints with respect to rain and fog, and some information as to how far the rays of the moon lit up the pavement, and from what direction the wind usually came.

On the bridge of the gutter stood three persons who wished to introduce themselves to the Lamp, for they thought the Lamp itself could appoint its successor. The first was a herring's head, that could gleam with light in the darkness. He thought it would be a great saving of oil if they put him up on the post. Number two was a piece of rotten wood, which also glimmers in the dark, and always more than a piece of fish, it said to itself ; besides, it was the last piece of a tree which had once been the pride of the forest. The third person was a glow-worm. Where this one had come from, the Lamp could not imagine ; but there it was, and it could give light. But the rotten wood and the herring's head swore by all that was good that it only gave light at certain times, and could not be brought into competition with themselves.

The old Lamp declared that not one of them gave sufficient light to fill the office of a street lamp ; but not one of them would believe this. When they heard that the Lamp had not the office to give away, they were very glad of it, and declared that the Lamp was too decrepit to make a good choice.

At the same moment the Wind came careering from the corner of the street, and blew through the air-holes of the old Street Lamp.

‘What’s this I hear?’ he asked. ‘Are you to go away to-morrow? Is this the last evening that I shall find you here? Then I must make you a present at parting. I will blow into your brain-box in such a way that you shall be able in future not only to remember everything you have seen and heard, but that you shall have such light within you as shall enable you to see all that is read of or spoken of in your presence.’

‘Yes, that is really much, very much!’ said the old Lamp. ‘I thank you heartily. I only hope I shall not be melted down.’

‘That is not likely to happen at once,’ said the Wind. ‘Now I will blow up your memory: if you receive several presents of this kind, you may pass your old days very agreeably.’

‘If only I am not melted down!’ said the Lamp again. ‘Or should I retain my memory even in that case?’

‘Be sensible, old Lamp,’ said the Wind. And he blew, and at that moment the Moon stepped forth from behind the clouds.

‘What will you give the old Lamp?’ asked the Wind.

‘I’ll give nothing,’ replied the Moon. ‘I am on the wane, and the lamps never lighted me; but, on the contrary, I’ve often given light for the lamps.’

And with these words the Moon hid herself again behind the clouds, to be safe from further importunity.

A drop now fell upon the Lamp, as if from the roof; but the drop explained that it came from the clouds, and was a present—perhaps the best present possible.

‘I shall penetrate you so completely that you shall receive the faculty, if you wish it, to turn into rust in one night, and to crumble into dust.’

The Lamp considered this a bad present, and the Wind thought so too.

‘Does no one give more? does no one give more?’ it blew as loud as it could.

Then a bright shooting star fell down, forming a long bright stripe.

‘What was that?’ cried the Herring’s Head. ‘Did not a star fall? I really think it went into the Lamp! Certainly if such high-born personages try for this office, we may say good night and betake ourselves home.’

And so they did, all three. But the old Lamp shed a marvellous strong light around.

‘That was a glorious present,’ it said. ‘The bright stars which I have always admired, and which shine as I could never shine though I shone with all my might, have noticed me, a poor old lamp, and have sent me a present, by giving me the faculty that all I remember and see as clearly as if

it stood before me, shall also be seen by all whom I love. And in this lies the true pleasure ; for joy that we cannot share with others is only half enjoyed.'

'That sentiment does honour to your heart,' said the Wind. 'But for that wax lights are necessary. If these are not lit up in you, your rare faculties will be of no use to others. Look you, the stars did not think of that ; they take you and every other light for wax. But now I am tired and I will lie down.' And he lay down.

The next day—yes, it will be best that we pass over the next day. The next evening the Lamp was resting in a grandfather's chair. And guess where ! In the watchman's dwelling. He had begged as a favour of the mayor and the council that he might keep the Street Lamp. They laughed at his request, but the Lamp was given to him, and now it lay in the great arm-chair by the warm stove. It seemed as if the Lamp had grown bigger, now that it occupied the chair all alone.

The old people sat at supper, and looked kindly at the old Lamp, to whom they would willingly have granted a place at their table.

Their dwelling was certainly only a cellar two yards below the footway, and one had to cross a stone passage to get into the room. But within it was very comfortable and warm, and strips of list had been nailed to the door. Everything looked clean and neat, and there were curtains round the bed and the little windows. On the window-sill stood two curious flower-pots, which sailor Christian had brought home from the East or West Indies. They were only of clay, and represented two elephants. The backs of these creatures were wanting ; and instead of them there bloomed from within the earth with which one elephant was filled, some very excellent leeks, and that was the old folk's kitchen garden ; out of the other grew a great geranium, and that was their flower garden. On the wall hung a great coloured print representing the Congress of Vienna. There you had all the Kings and Emperors at once. A Grandfather's clock with heavy weights went 'tick ! tick !' and in fact it always went too fast ; but the old people declared this was far better than if it went too slow. They ate their supper, and the

Street Lamp lay, as I have said, in the arm-chair close beside the stove. It seemed to the Lamp as if the whole world had been turned round. But when the old watchman looked at it, and spoke of all that they two had gone through in rain and in fog, in the bright short nights of summer and in the long winter nights, when the snow beat down, and one longed to be at home in the cellar, then the old Lamp found its wits again. It saw everything as clearly as if it was happening then ; yes, the Wind had kindled a capital light for it.

The old people were very active and industrious ; not a single hour was wasted in idleness. On Sunday afternoon some book or other was brought out ; generally a book of travels. And the old man read aloud about Africa, about the great woods, with elephants running about wild ; and the old woman listened intently, and looked furtively at the clay elephants which served for flower-pots.

‘ I can almost imagine it to myself ! ’ said she.

And the Lamp wished particularly that a wax candle had been there, and could be lighted up in it ; for then the old woman would be able to see everything to the smallest detail, just as the Lamp saw it—the tall trees with great branches all entwined, the naked black men on horseback, and whole droves of elephants crashing through the reeds with their broad clumsy feet.

‘ Of what use are all my faculties if I can’t obtain a wax light ? ’ sighed the Lamp. ‘ They have only oil and tallow candles, and that ’s not enough.’

One day a great number of wax candle-ends came down into the cellar: the larger pieces were burned, and the smaller ones the old woman used for waxing her thread. So there were wax candles enough ; but no one thought of putting a little piece into the Lamp.

‘ Here I stand with my rare faculties ! ’ thought the Lamp. ‘ I carry everything within me, and cannot let them partake of it ; they don’t know that I am able to cover these white walls with the most gorgeous tapestry, to change them into noble forests, and all that they can possibly wish.’

The Lamp, however, was kept neat and clean, and stood all shining in a corner, where it caught the eyes of all.

Strangers considered it a bit of old rubbish ; but the old people did not care for that ; they loved the Lamp.

One day—it was the old watchman's birthday—the old woman approached the Lantern, smiling to herself, and said, 'I'll make an illumination to-day, in honour of my old man !'

And the Lamp rattled its metal cover, for it thought, 'Well, at last there will be a light within me.' But only oil was produced, and no wax light appeared. The Lamp burned throughout the whole evening, but now understood, only too well, that the gift of the stars would be a hidden treasure for all its life. Then it had a dream : for one possessing its rare faculties, to dream was not difficult. It seemed as if the old people were dead, and that itself had been taken to the iron foundry to be melted down. It felt as much alarmed as on that day when it was to appear in the council-house to be inspected by the mayor and council. But though the power had been given to it to fall into rust and dust at will, it did not use this power. It was put into the furnace, and turned into an iron candlestick, as fair a candlestick as you would desire—one on which wax lights were to be burned. It had received the form of an angel holding a great nosegay ; and the wax light was to be placed in the middle of the nosegay.

The candlestick had a place assigned to it on a green writing-table. The room was very comfortable ; many books stood round about the walls, which were hung with beautiful pictures ; it belonged to a poet. Everything that he wrote or composed showed itself round about him. The room was changed to thick dark forests, sometimes to beautiful meadows, where the storks strutted about, sometimes again to a ship sailing on the foaming ocean.

'What faculties lie hidden in me !' said the old Lamp, when it awoke. 'I could almost wish to be melted down ! But no ! that must not be so long as the old people live. They love me for myself ; I am like a child to them ; they have cleaned me and have given me oil. I am as well off now as the whole Congress.'

And from that time it enjoyed more inward peace ; and the honest old Street Lamp had well deserved to enjoy it.

THE NEIGHBOURING FAMILIES

ONE would really have thought that something important was going on by the duck-pond ; but nothing was going on. All the ducks lying quietly upon the water, or standing on their heads in it—for they could do that—swam suddenly to the shore. One could see the traces of their feet on the wet clay, and their quacking sounded far and wide. The water, lately clear and bright as a mirror, was quite in a commotion. Before, every tree, every neighbouring bush, the old farm-house with the holes in the roof and the swallow's nest, and especially the great rose bush covered with flowers, had been mirrored in it. This rose bush covered the wall and hung over the water, in which everything appeared as in a picture, only that everything stood on its head ; but when the water was set in motion each thing ran into the other, and the picture was gone. Two feathers, which the fluttering ducks had lost, floated to and fro, and all at once they took a start, as if the wind were coming ; but the wind did not come, so they had to be still, and the water became quiet and smooth again. One could see distinctly the gable, with the swallow's nest, and the rose bush. The Roses mirrored themselves in it again ; they were beautiful, but they did not know it, for no one had told them. The sun shone among the delicate leaves ; everything breathed in the sweet fragrance, and all felt as we feel when we are filled with the thought of our greatest happiness.

‘How beautiful is life!’ said each Rose. ‘Only one thing I wish, that I were able to kiss the sun, because it is so bright and so warm. The roses, too, in the water yonder, our images, I should like to kiss, and the pretty birds in the nests. There are some up yonder too ; they thrust out their heads and pipe quite feebly : they have no feathers like their father and mother. They are good neighbours, below and above. How beautiful is life!’

The young ones above and below—those below are certainly only shadows in the water—were Sparrows ; their parents were Sparrows too ; they had taken possession of the empty swallow's nest of last year, and kept house in it as if it had been their own.

'Are those ducks' children swimming yonder?' asked the young Sparrows, when they noticed the ducks' feathers upon the water.

'If you must ask questions, ask sensible ones,' replied their mother. 'Don't you see that they are feathers? living clothes, stuff like I wear and like you will wear; but ours is finer. I wish, by the way, we had those up here in our own nest, for they keep one warm. I wonder what the ducks were so frightened at; there must have been something in the water. Not at me, certainly, though I said "Piep" to you rather loudly. The thick-headed roses ought to know it, but they know nothing; they only look at one another and smell. I'm very tired of those neighbours.'

'Just listen to those darling birds up there,' said the Roses. 'They begin to want to sing, but are not able yet. But it will come in time. What a pleasure that must be! It's nice to have such merry neighbours.'

Suddenly two horses came galloping up to water. A peasant boy rode on one, and he had taken off all his clothes, except his big black hat which was so big and broad. The boy whistled like a bird, and rode into the pond where it was deepest, and when he came past the rose bush he plucked a rose, and put it upon his hat. And now he thought he looked very fine, and rode on. The other Roses looked after their sister, and said to each other, 'Whither may she be journeying?' but they did not know.

'I should like to go out into the world,' said the one to the other; 'but it's beautiful, too, here at home among the green leaves. All day the sun shines warm and bright, and in the night-time the sky is more beautiful still; we can see that through all the little holes in it.'

They meant the stars, but they knew no better.

'We make it lively about the house,' said the Mother-Sparrow; 'and "the swallow's nest brings luck", people say, so they're glad to see us. But the neighbours! Such a rose bush climbing up the wall causes damp. It will most likely be taken away; and then, at least, corn will perhaps grow here. The roses are fit for nothing but to be looked at and smelt, or at most one may be stuck on a hat. Every year, I know from my mother, they fall off.'

The farmer's wife preserves them, and puts salt among them ; then they get a French name that I neither can nor will pronounce, and are put upon the fire to make a good smell. You see, *that's* their life. They're only for the eye and the nose. Now you know it.'

When the evening came, and the gnats danced in the warm air and the red clouds, the Nightingale came and sang to the Roses, saying that the beautiful was like sunshine to the world, and that the beautiful lived for ever. But the Roses thought the Nightingale was singing of itself, and indeed one might easily have thought so ; they never imagined that the song was about them. But they rejoiced greatly in it, and wondered whether all the little Sparrows might become nightingales.

'I understood the song of that bird very well,' said the young Sparrows, 'only one word was not clear. What is *the beautiful* ?'

'That's nothing at all,' replied the Mother-Sparrow ; 'that's only an outside affair. Yonder, at the nobleman's seat, where the pigeons have their own house, and have corn and peas strewn before them every day,—I've been there myself, and dined with them ; for tell me what company you keep, and I'll tell you who you are—yonder at the nobleman's seat there are two birds with green necks and a crest upon their head ; they can spread out their tails like a great wheel, and then it plays with various colours, so that the sight makes one's eyes ache. These birds are called peacocks, and that's *the beautiful*. They should only be plucked a little, then they would look no better than all the rest of us. I should have plucked them myself if they had not been so large.'

'I'll pluck them,' piped the little Sparrow who had no feathers yet.

In the farm-house dwelt two young married people ; they loved each other well, were industrious and active, and everything in their home looked very pretty. On Sunday morning the young wife came out, plucked a handful of the most beautiful roses, and put them into a glass of water, which she put upon the cupboard.

'Now I see that it is Sunday,' said the husband, and he kissed his little wife.

They sat down, read their hymn-book, and held each other by the hand ; and the sun shone on the fresh roses and the young couple.

‘This sight is really too wearisome,’ said the Mother-Sparrow, who could look from the nest into the room ; and she flew away.

The same thing happened the next Sunday, for every Sunday fresh roses were placed in the glass ; but the rose bush bloomed as beautiful as ever.

The young Sparrows had feathers now, and wanted to fly out too, but the mother would not allow it, and they were obliged to stay at home. She flew alone ; but, however it may have happened, before she was aware of it, she was entangled in a noose of horse-hair which some boys had fastened to the branches. The horse-hair wound itself fast round her legs, as fast as if it would cut the leg through. What pain, what a fright she was in !

The boys came running up, and seized the bird ; and indeed, roughly enough.

‘It’s only a Sparrow,’ said they ; but they did not let her go, but took her home with them. And whenever she cried, they tapped her on the beak.

In the farm-house stood an old man, who understood making soap for shaving and washing, in cakes as well as in balls. He was a merry, wandering old man. When he saw the Sparrow, which the boys had brought, and for which they said they did not care, he said,

‘Shall we make it very beautiful ?’

The Mother-Sparrow felt an icy shudder pass through her.

Out of the box, in which were the most brilliant colours, the old man took a quantity of shining gold leaf, and the boys were sent for some white of egg, with which the Sparrow was completely smeared ; the gold leaf was stuck upon that, and there was the Mother-Sparrow gilded all over. She did not think of the adornment, but trembled all over. And the soap-man tore off a fragment from the red lining of his old jacket, cut notches in it, so that it looked like a cock’s comb, and stuck it on the bird’s head.

‘Now you shall see the gold bird fly,’ said the old man ; and he released the Sparrow, which flew away in deadly fear, with the sunlight shining upon her.

How it glittered ! All the Sparrows, and even a Crow, a knowing old boy, were startled at the sight ; but still they flew after her, to know what kind of strange bird this might be.

‘ From where, from where ? ’ cried the Crow.

‘ Wait a bit, wait a bit ! ’ said the Sparrows, but it would not wait.

Driven by fear and horror, she flew homeward ; she was nearly sinking powerless to the earth ; the flock of pursuing birds increased, and some even tried to peck at her.

‘ Look at her ! look at her ! ’ they all cried.

‘ Look at her ! look at her ! ’ cried the young ones, when the Mother-Sparrow approached the nest. ‘ That must be a young peacock. He glitters with all colours. It quite hurts one’s eyes, as mother told us. Piep ! that’s *the beautiful !* ’

And now they pecked at the bird with their little beaks, so that she could not possibly get into the nest ; she was so much exhausted that she could not even say ‘ Piep ! ’ much less ‘ I am your mother ! ’

The other birds also fell upon the Sparrow, and plucked off feather after feather till she fell bleeding into the rose bush.

‘ You poor creature ! ’ said all the Roses : ‘ be quiet, and we will hide you. Lean your head against us. ’

The Sparrow spread out her wings once more, then drew them tight to her body, and lay dead by the neighbouring family, the beautiful fresh Roses.

‘ Piep ! ’ sounded from the nest. ‘ Where can our mother be ? It’s quite inexplicable. It cannot be a trick of hers, and mean that we’re to shift for ourselves : she has left us the house as an inheritance, but to which of us shall it belong when we have families of our own ? ’

‘ Yes, it won’t do for you to stay with me when I enlarge my establishment with a wife and children,’ observed the smallest.

‘ I shall have more wives and children than you ! ’ cried the second.

‘ But I am the eldest ! ’ said the third.

Now they all became excited. They struck out with their wings, hacked with their beaks, and flump ! one after another

was thrust out of the nest. There they lay with their anger, holding their heads on one side, and blinking with the eye that looked upwards. That was their way of being sulky.

They could fly a little ; by practice they improved, and at last they fixed upon a sign by which they should know each other when they met later in the world. This sign was to be the cry of ' Piep ! ' with a scratching of the left foot three times against the ground.

The young Sparrow that had remained behind in the nest made itself as broad as it possibly could, for it was the proprietor. But the proprietorship did not last long. In the night the red fire burst through the window, the flames seized upon the roof, the dry straw blazed brightly up, and the whole house was burned, and the young Sparrow too ; but the others escaped with their lives.

When the sun rose again, and everything looked as much refreshed as if nature had had a quiet sleep, there remained of the farm-house nothing but a few charred beams, leaning against the chimney that was now its own master. Thick smoke still rose from among the fragments, but without stood the rose bush quite unharmed, and every flower, every twig, was reflected in the clear water.

' How beautifully those roses bloom before the ruined house ! ' cried a passer-by. ' I cannot imagine a more agreeable picture : I must have that.'

And the traveller took out of his portfolio a little book with white leaves : he was a painter, and with his pencil he drew the smoking house, the charred beams, and the overhanging chimney, which bent more and more ; quite in the foreground appeared the blooming rose bush, which presented a charming sight, and indeed for its sake the whole picture had been made.

Later in the day, the two Sparrows that had been born here came by.

' Where is the house ? ' asked they. ' Where is the nest ? Piep ! All is burned, and our strong brother is burned too. That 's what he has got by keeping the nest to himself. The Roses have escaped well enough—there they stand yet, with their red cheeks. They certainly don't mourn at their neighbour's misfortune. I won't speak to them ;

it's so ugly here, that's my opinion.' And they flew up and away.

On a beautiful sunny autumn day, when one could almost have believed it was the middle of summer, there hopped about in the clean dry courtyard of the nobleman's seat, in front of the great steps, a number of pigeons, black, and white, and violet, all shining in the sunlight. The old Mother-Pigeons said to their young ones,

'Stand in groups, stand in groups, for that looks much better.'

'What are those little grey creatures, that run about among us?' asked an old Pigeon, with red and green in her eyes. 'Little grey ones, little grey ones!' she cried.

'They are sparrows, good creatures. We have always had the reputation of being kind, so we will allow them to pick up the corn with us. They don't interrupt conversation, and they scrape so nicely with the leg.'

Yes, they scraped three times each with the left leg, and said, 'Piep.' By that they recognized each other as the Sparrows from the nest by the burned house.

'Here's very good eating,' said the Sparrows.

The Pigeons strutted round one another, bulged out their chests mightily, and had their own opinions.

'Do you see that pouter-pigeon?' said one, speaking to the others. 'Do you see that one, swallowing the peas? She takes too many, and the best, moreover. Curoo! curoo! Do you see how bald she is getting on her crest, the ugly spiteful thing! Curoo! curoo!'

And all their eyes sparkled with spite.

'Stand in groups, stand in groups! Little grey ones, little grey ones! Curoo! curoo!'

So their beaks went on and on, and so they will go on when a thousand years are gone.

The Sparrows feasted bravely. They listened attentively, and even stood in the ranks of the Pigeons, but it did not suit them well. They were satisfied, and so they quitted the Pigeons, exchanged opinions concerning them, slipped under the garden railings, and when they found the door of the garden open, one of them, who was over-fed, and consequently valorous, hopped on the threshold.

'Piep!' said he, 'I may venture that.'

‘Piep!’ said the other, ‘so can I, and something more too.’

And he hopped right into the room. No one was present; the third Sparrow saw that, and hopped still farther into the room, and said,

‘Right in or not at all! By the way, this is a funny man’s-nest; and what have they put up there? What’s that?’

Just in front of the Sparrows the roses were blooming; they were mirrored in the water, and the charred beams leaned against the toppling chimney.

‘Why, what is this? How came this in the room in the nobleman’s house?’

And then these Sparrows wanted to fly over the chimney and the roses, but flew against a flat wall. It was all a picture, a great beautiful picture, that the painter had completed from a sketch.

‘Piep!’ said the Sparrows, ‘it’s nothing, it only looks like something. Piep! that’s *the beautiful*! Can you understand it? I can’t.’

And they flew away, for some people came into the room.

Days and years went by. The Pigeons had often cooed, not to say growled,—the spiteful things; the Sparrows had suffered cold in winter, and lived riotously in summer; they were all betrothed or married, or whatever you like to call it. They had little ones, and of course each thought his own the handsomest and the cleverest: one flew this way, another that, and when they met they knew each other by their ‘Piep!’ and the three scrapes with the left leg. The eldest had remained a maiden Sparrow, with no nest and no young ones. Her great idea was to see a town, therefore she flew to Copenhagen.

There was to be seen a great house painted with many colours, close by the castle and by the canal, in which latter swam many ships laden with apples and pottery. The windows were broader below than at the top, and when the Sparrows looked through, every room appeared to them like a tulip with the most beautiful colours and shades. But in the middle of the tulip were white people, made of marble; a few certainly were made of plaster, but in the eyes of a sparrow that’s all the same. Upon the roof

stood a metal carriage, with metal horses harnessed to it, and the Goddess of Victory, also of bronze, driving. It was THORWALDSEN'S MUSEUM.

'How it shines! how it shines!' said the little maiden Sparrow. 'I suppose that's what they call *the beautiful*. Piep! But this is greater than the peacock!'

It still remembered what, in its days of childhood, the Mother-Sparrow had declared to be the greatest among the beautiful. The Sparrow flew down into the courtyard. There everything was very splendid: upon the walls palms and branches were painted; in the midst of the court stood a great blooming rose tree, spreading out its fresh branches, covered with many roses, over a grave. Thither the Sparrow flew, for there she saw many of her own kind. 'Piep!' and three scrapes with the left leg—that salutation it had often made throughout the summer, and nobody had replied, for friends who are once parted don't meet every day; and now this form of greeting had become quite a habit with it. But to-day two old Sparrows and a young one replied 'Piep!' and scraped three times each with the left leg.

'Ah! good day! good day!' They were three old ones from the nest, and a little one belonging to the family. 'Do we meet here again? It's a grand place, but there's not much to eat. This is *the beautiful*! Piep!'

And many people came out of the side chambers where the glorious marble statues stood, and approached the grave where slept the great master who had formed these marble images. All stood with radiant faces by Thorwaldsen's grave, and some gathered up the fallen rose leaves and kept them. They had come from afar: some from mighty England, others from Germany and France. The most beautiful among the ladies plucked one of the roses and hid it in her bosom. Then the Sparrows thought that the roses ruled here, and that the whole house had been built for their sake; that appeared to them to be too much; but as all the people showed their love for the roses, they would not be behindhand. 'Piep!' they said, and swept the ground with their tails, and glanced with one eye at the roses; and they had not looked long at the flowers before they recognized them as old neighbours. And so the roses

really were. The painter who had sketched the rose bush by the ruined house had afterwards received permission to dig it up, and had given it to the architect, for nowhere could more beautiful roses be found. And the architect had planted it upon Thorwaldsen's grave, where it bloomed, an image of the beautiful, and gave its red fragrant petals to be carried into distant lands as mementoes.

'Have you found a situation here in the town?' asked the Sparrows.

And the Roses nodded; they recognized their grey neighbours, and were glad to see them again. 'How glorious it is to live and bloom, to see old faces again, and cheerful faces every day. Here it is as if every day was a great holiday.

'Piep!' said the Sparrows. 'Yes, these are truly our old neighbours; we remember their origin by the pond. Piep! how they've got on! Yes, some people succeed while they're asleep, and what rarity there is in a red thing like that, I can't understand. Why, yonder is a withered leaf—I see it quite plainly!'

And they pecked at it till the leaf fell. But the tree stood there greener and fresher than ever; the Roses bloomed in the sunshine by Thorwaldsen's grave, and were associated with his immortal name.

THE SHADOW

IN the hot countries the sun burns very strongly; there the people become quite mahogany brown, and in the very hottest countries they are even burned into negroes. But this time it was only to the hot countries that a learned man out of the cold regions had come. He thought he could roam about there just as he had been accustomed to do at home; but he soon altered his opinion. He and all sensible people had to remain at home, where the window-shutters and doors were shut all day long, and it looked as if all the inmates were asleep or had gone out. The narrow street with the high houses in which he lived was,

however, built in such a way that the sun shone upon it from morning till evening ; it was really quite unbearable ! The learned man from the cold regions was a young man and a clever man : it seemed to him as if he was sitting in a glowing oven that exhausted him greatly, and he became quite thin ; even his Shadow shrivelled up and became much smaller than it had been at home ; the sun even told upon it, and it did not recover till the evening, when the sun went down. It was really a pleasure to see this. So soon as a light was brought into the room the Shadow stretched itself quite up the wall, farther even than the ceiling, so tall did it make itself ; it was obliged to stretch to get strength again. The learned man went out into the balcony to stretch himself, and as soon as the stars came out in the beautiful clear sky, he felt himself reviving. On all the balconies in the streets—and in the hot countries there is a balcony to every window—people now appeared, for one must breathe fresh air, even if one has got used to being mahogany ; then it became lively above and below ; the shoemakers and tailors and everybody sat below in the street ; then tables and chairs were brought out, and candles burned, yes, more than a thousand candles ; one talked and another sang, and the people walked to and fro ; carriages drove past, mules trotted, ‘Kling-ling-ling !’ for they had bells on their harness ; dead people were buried with solemn songs ; the church bells rang, and it was indeed very lively in the street. Only in one house, just opposite to that in which the learned man dwelt, it was quite quiet, and yet somebody lived there, for there were flowers upon the balcony, blooming beautifully in the hot sun, and they could not have done this if they had not been watered, so that some one must have watered them ; therefore, there must be people in that house. Towards evening the door was half opened, but it was dark, at least in the front room ; farther back, in the interior, music was heard. The strange learned man thought this music very lovely, but it was quite possible that he only imagined this, for out there in the hot countries he found everything exquisite, if only there had been no sun. The stranger’s landlord said that he did not know who had taken the opposite house—one saw nobody there, and so far as the

music was concerned, it seemed very monotonous to him.

‘It was just,’ he said, ‘as if some one sat there, always practising a piece that he could not manage—always the same piece. He seemed to say, “I shall manage it, after all;” but he did not manage it, however long he played.’

The stranger was asleep one night. He slept with the balcony door open : the wind lifted up the curtain before it, and he fancied that a wonderful radiance came from the balcony of the house opposite ; all the flowers appeared like flames of the most gorgeous colours, and in the midst, among the flowers, stood a beautiful slender maiden : it seemed as if a radiance came from her also. His eyes were quite dazzled ; but he had only opened them too wide just when he awoke out of his sleep. With one leap he was out of bed ; quite quietly he crept behind the curtain ; but the maiden was gone, the splendour was gone, the flowers gleamed no longer, but stood there as beautiful as ever. The door was ajar, and from within sounded music, so lovely, so charming, that one fell into sweet thought at the sound. It was just like magic work. But who lived there ? Where was the real entrance ? for towards the street and towards the lane at the side the whole ground floor was shop by shop, and the people could not always run through there.

One evening the stranger sat up on his balcony ; in the room just behind him a light was burning, and so it was quite natural that his Shadow fell upon the wall of the opposite house ; yes, it sat just among the flowers on the balcony, and when the stranger moved his Shadow moved too.

‘I think my Shadow is the only living thing we see yonder,’ said the learned man. ‘Look how gracefully it sits among the flowers. The door is only ajar, but the Shadow ought to be sensible enough to walk in and look round, and then come back and tell me what it has seen.’

‘Yes, you would thus make yourself very useful,’ said he, in sport. ‘Be so good as to slip in. Now, will you go ?’ And then he nodded at the Shadow, and the Shadow nodded back at him. ‘Now go, but don’t stay away altogether.’

And the stranger stood up, and the Shadow on the balcony opposite stood up too, and the stranger turned round, and the Shadow turned also, and if any one had noticed closely he would have remarked how the Shadow went away in the same moment, straight through the half-opened door of the opposite house, as the stranger returned into his room and let the curtain fall.

Next morning the learned man went out to drink coffee and read the papers.

‘What is this?’ said he, when he came out into the sunshine. ‘I have no Shadow! So it really went away yesterday evening, and did not come back: that’s very tiresome.’

And that fretted him, but not so much because the Shadow was gone as because he knew that there was a story of a man without a shadow. All the people in the cold lands knew this story, and if the learned man came home and told his own history, they would say that it was only an imitation, and he did not choose that they should say this of him. So he would not speak of it at all, and that was a very sensible idea of his.

In the evening he again went out on his balcony: he had placed the light behind him, for he knew that a shadow always wants its master for a screen, but he could not coax it forth. He made himself little, he made himself long, but there was no shadow, and no shadow came. He said, ‘Here, here!’ but that did no good.

That was vexatious, but in the warm countries everything grows very quickly, and after the lapse of a week he remarked to his great joy that a new shadow was growing out of his legs when he went into the sunshine, so that the root must have remained behind. After three weeks he had quite a respectable shadow, which, when he started on his return to the North, grew more and more, so that at last it was so long and great that he could very well have parted with half of it.

When the learned man got home he wrote books about what is true in the world, and what is good, and what is pretty; and days went by, and years went by, many years.

He was one evening sitting in his room when there came

a little quiet knock at the door. 'Come in!' said he; but nobody came. Then he opened the door, and there stood before him such a remarkably thin man that he felt quite uncomfortable. This man was, however, very respectably dressed; he looked like a man of standing.

'Whom have I the honour to address?' asked the professor.

'Ah!' replied the genteel man, 'I thought you would not know me; I have become so much a body that I have got real flesh and clothes. You never thought to see me in such a condition. Don't you know your old Shadow? You certainly never thought that I would come again. Things have gone remarkably well with me since I was with you last. I've become rich in every respect: if I want to buy myself free from servitude I can do it!'

And he rattled a number of valuable charms, which hung by his watch, and put his hand upon the thick gold chain he wore round his neck; and how the diamond rings glittered on his fingers! and everything was real!

'No, I cannot regain my self-possession at all!' said the learned man. 'What's the meaning of all this?'

'Nothing common,' said the Shadow. 'But you yourself don't belong to common folks; and I have, as you very well know, trodden in your footsteps from my childhood upwards. So soon as you thought that I was experienced enough to find my way through the world alone, I went away. I am in the most brilliant circumstances; but I was seized with a kind of longing to see you once more before you die, and I wanted to see these regions once more, for one always thinks much of one's fatherland. I know that you have got another shadow: have I anything to pay to it, or to you? You have only to tell me.'

'Is it really you?' said the learned man. 'Why, that is wonderful! I should never have thought that I should ever meet my old Shadow as a man!'

'Only tell me what I have to pay,' said the Shadow, 'for I don't like to be in any one's debt.'

'How can you talk in that way?' said the learned man. 'Of what debt can there be a question here? You are as free as any one! I am exceedingly pleased at your good fortune! Sit down, old friend, and tell me a little how it

has happened, and what you saw in the warm countries, and in the house opposite ours.'

'Yes, that I will tell you,' said the Shadow; and it sat down. 'But then you must promise me never to tell any one in this town, when you meet me, that I have been your Shadow! I have the intention of engaging myself to be married; I can do more than support a family.'

'Be quite easy,' replied the learned man; 'I will tell nobody who you really are. Here's my hand. I promise it, and my word's as good as my bond.'

'A Shadow's word in return!' said the Shadow, for he was obliged to talk in that way. But, by the way, it was quite wonderful how complete a man he had become. He was dressed all in black, and wore the very finest black cloth, polished boots, and a hat that could be crushed together till it was nothing but crown and rim, besides what we have already noticed of him, namely, the charms, the gold neck-chain, and the diamond rings. The Shadow was indeed wonderfully well clothed; and it was just this that made a complete man of him.

'Now I will tell you,' said the Shadow; and then he put down his polished boots as firmly as he could on the arm of the learned man's new shadow that lay like a poodle dog at his feet. This was done perhaps from pride, perhaps so that the new shadow might stick to his feet; but the prostrate shadow remained quite quiet, so that it might listen well, for it wanted to know how one could get free and work up to be one's own master.

'Do you know who lived in the house opposite to us?' asked the Shadow. 'That was the most glorious of all; it was Poetry! I was there for three weeks, and that was just as if one had lived there a thousand years, and could read all that has been written and composed. For this I say, and it is truth, I have seen everything, and I know everything!'

'Poetry!' cried the learned man. 'Yes, she often lives as a hermit in great cities. Poetry! Yes, I myself saw her for one single brief moment, but sleep was heavy on my eyes: she stood on the balcony, gleaming as the Northern Light gleams. Tell me! tell me! You were upon the balcony. You went through the door, and then——'

‘Then I was in the ante-room,’ said the Shadow. ‘You sat opposite, and were always looking across at the ante-room. There was no light ; a kind of twilight reigned there ; but one door after another in a whole row of halls and rooms stood open, and there it was light ; and the mass of light would have killed me if I had got as far as to where the maiden sat. But I was deliberate, I took my time ; and that’s what one must do.’

‘And what didst thou see then ?’ asked the learned man.

‘I saw everything, and I will tell you what ; but—it is really not pride on my part—as a free man, and with the acquirements I possess, besides my good position and my remarkable fortune, I wish you would say *you* to me.’

‘I beg your pardon,’ said the learned man. ‘This *thou* is an old habit, and old habits are difficult to alter. You are perfectly right, and I will remember it. But now tell me everything you saw.’

‘Everything,’ said the Shadow ; ‘for I saw everything, and I know everything.’

‘How did things look in the inner room ?’ asked the learned man. ‘Was it there as in the fresh wood ? Was it there as in a holy temple ? Were the chambers like the starry sky, when one stands on the high mountains ?’

‘Everything was there,’ said the Shadow. ‘I was certainly not quite inside ; I remained in the front room, in the darkness ; but I stood there remarkably well. I saw everything and know everything. I have been in the ante-room at the Court of Poetry.’

‘But what did you see ? Did all the gods of antiquity march through the halls ? Did the old heroes fight there ? Did lovely children play there, and relate their dreams ?’

‘I tell you that I have been there, and so you will easily understand that I saw everything that was to be seen. If *you* had got there you would not have become a man ; but I became one, and at the same time I learned to understand my inner being and the relation in which I stood to Poetry. Yes, when I was with you I did not think of these things ; but you know that whenever the sun rises or sets I am wonderfully great. In the moonshine I was

almost more noticeable than you yourself. I did not then understand my inward being ; in the ante-room it was revealed to me. I became a man ! I came out ripe. But you were no longer in the warm countries. I was ashamed to go about as a man in the state I was then in : I required boots, clothes, and all this human varnish by which a man is known. I hid myself ; yes, I can confide a secret to you—you will not put it into a book. I hid myself under the cake-woman's gown ; the woman had no idea how much she concealed. Only in the evening did I go out : I ran about the streets by moonlight ; I stretched myself quite long up the wall : that tickled my back quite agreeably. I ran up and down, looked through the highest windows into the halls and through the roof, where nobody could see, and I saw what nobody saw and what nobody ought to see. On the whole it is a despicable world : I would not be a man if it were not commonly supposed that it is something to be one. I saw the most incredible things going on among men, and women, and parents, and "dear incomparable children". I saw what no one else knows, but what they all would be very glad to know, namely, bad goings on at their neighbours'. If I had written a newspaper, how it would have been read ! But I wrote directly to the persons interested, and there was terror in every town to which I came. They were so afraid of me that they were remarkably fond of me. The professor made me a professor ; the tailor gave me new clothes (I am well provided) ; the mint-master coined money for me ; the women declared I was handsome : and thus I became the man I am. And now, farewell ! Here is my card ; I live on the sunny side, and am always at home in rainy weather.'

And the Shadow went away.

'That was very remarkable,' said the learned man.

Years and days passed by, and the Shadow came again.

'How goes it ?' he asked.

'Ah !' said the learned man, 'I'm writing about the true, the good, and the beautiful ; but nobody cares to hear of anything of the kind : I am quite in despair, for I take that to heart.'

'That I do not,' said the Shadow. 'I'm becoming fat

and hearty, and that's what one must try to become. You don't understand the world, and you're getting ill. You must travel. I'll make a journey this summer; will you go too? I should like to have a travelling companion; will you go with me as my shadow? I shall be very happy to take you, and I'll pay the expenses.'

'That's going a little too far,' said the learned man.

'As you take it,' replied the Shadow. 'A journey will do you a great deal of good. Will you be my shadow?—then you shall have everything on the journey for nothing.'

'That's too strong!' said the learned man.

'But it's the way of the world,' said the Shadow, 'and so it will remain!' And he went away.

The learned man was not at all fortunate. Sorrow and care pursued him, and what he said of the true and the good and the beautiful was as little valued by most people as roses would be by a cow. At last he became quite ill.

'You really look like a shadow!' people said; and a shiver ran through him at these words, for he attached a peculiar meaning to them.

'You must go to a watering-place!' said the Shadow, who came to pay him a visit. 'There's no other help for you. I'll take you with me, for the sake of old acquaintance. I'll pay the expenses of the journey, and you shall make a description of it, and shorten time for me on the way. I want to visit a watering-place. My beard doesn't grow quite as it should, and that is a kind of illness; and a beard I must have. Now, be reasonable and accept my proposal: we shall travel like comrades.'

And they travelled. The Shadow was master now, and the master was shadow: they drove together, they rode together, and walked side by side, and before and behind each other, just as the sun happened to stand. The Shadow always knew when to take the place of honour. The learned man did not particularly notice this, for he had a very good heart, and was moreover particularly mild and friendly. Then one day the master said to the Shadow,

'As we have in this way become travelling companions, and have also from childhood's days grown up with one another, shall we not drink brotherhood? That sounds more confidential.'

‘You’re saying a thing there,’ said the Shadow, who was now really the master, ‘that is said in a very kind and straightforward way. I will be just as kind and straightforward. You, who are a learned gentleman, know very well how wonderful nature is. There are some men who cannot bear to touch brown paper, they become sick at it; others shudder to the marrow of their bones if one scratches with a nail upon a pane of glass; and I for my part have a similar feeling when any one says “thou” to me; I feel myself, as I did in my first position with you, oppressed by it. You see that this is a feeling, not pride. I cannot let you say “thou”¹ to me, but I will gladly say “thou” to you; and thus your wish will be at any rate partly fulfilled.’

And now the Shadow addressed his former master as ‘thou’.

‘That’s rather strong,’ said the latter, ‘that I am to say “you”, while he says “thou”.’ But he was obliged to submit to it.

They came to a bathing-place, where many strangers were, and among them a beautiful young Princess, who had this disease, that she saw too sharply, which was very disquieting. She at once saw that the new arrival was a very different personage from all the rest.

‘They say he is here to get his beard to grow; but I see the real reason—he can’t throw a shadow.’

She had now become inquisitive, and therefore she at once began a conversation with the strange gentleman on the promenade. As a Princess, she was not obliged to use much ceremony, therefore she said outright to him at once,

‘Your illness consists in this, that you can’t throw a shadow.’

‘Your Royal Highness must be much better,’ replied the Shadow. ‘I know your illness consists in this, that you see too sharply; but you have got the better of that. I have a very unusual shadow: don’t you see the person who always accompanies me? Other people have a common shadow, but I don’t love what is common. One often gives one’s servants finer cloth for their liveries than one wears

¹ On the Continent, people who have ‘drunk brotherhood’ address each other as ‘thou’, in preference to the more ceremonious ‘you’.

oneself, and so I have let my shadow deck himself out like a separate person; yes, you see I have even given him a shadow of his own. That cost very much, but I like to have something peculiar.'

'How!' said the Princess, 'can I really have been cured? This is the best bathing-place in existence; water has



wonderful power nowadays. But I'm not going away from here yet, for now it begins to be amusing. The stranger—pleases me remarkably well. I only hope his beard won't grow, for if it does he'll go away.'

That evening the Princess and the Shadow danced together in the great ball-room. She was light, but he was still lighter; never had she seen such a dancer. She told him from what country she came, and he knew the country—he had been there, but just when she had been absent.

He had looked through the windows of her castle, from below as well as from above ; he had learned many circumstances, and could therefore make allusions, and give replies to the Princess, at which she marvelled greatly. She thought he must be the cleverest man in all the world, and was inspired with great respect for all his knowledge. And when she danced with him again, she fell in love with him, and the Shadow noticed that particularly, for she looked him almost through and through with her eyes. They danced together once more, and she was nearly telling him, but she was discreet : she thought of her country, and her kingdom, and of the many people over whom she was to rule.

‘He is a clever man,’ she said to herself, ‘and that is well, and he dances capitally, and that is well too ; but has he well-grounded knowledge ? That is just as important, and he must be examined.’

And she immediately put such a difficult question to him, that she could not have answered it herself ; and the Shadow made a wry face.

‘You cannot answer me that,’ said the Princess.

‘I learned that in my childhood,’ replied the Shadow, ‘and I believe my very shadow, standing yonder by the door, could answer it.’

‘Your shadow !’ cried the Princess : ‘that would be very remarkable.’

‘I do not assert as quite certain that he can do so,’ said the Shadow, ‘but I am almost inclined to believe it, he has now accompanied me and listened for so many years. But your Royal Highness will allow me to remind you that he is so proud of passing for a man, that, if he is to be in a good humour, and he should be so to answer rightly, he must be treated just like a man.’

‘I like that,’ said the Princess.

And now she went to the learned man at the door ; and she spoke with him of sun and moon, of people both inside and out, and the learned man answered very cleverly and very well.

‘What a man that must be, who has such a clever shadow !’ she thought. ‘It would be a real blessing for my country and for my people if I chose him for my husband ; and I’ll do it !’

And they soon struck a bargain—the Princess and the Shadow ; but no one was to know anything of it till she had returned to her kingdom.

‘No one—not even my shadow,’ said the Shadow ; and for this he had especial reasons.

And they came to the country where the Princess ruled, and where was her home.

‘Listen, my friend,’ said the Shadow to the learned man. ‘Now I am as lucky and powerful as any one can become, I’ll do something particular for you. You shall live with me in my palace, drive with me in the royal carriage, and have a hundred thousand dollars a year ; but you must let yourself be called a shadow by every one, and may never say that you were once a man ; and once a year, when I sit on the balcony and show myself, you must lie at my feet as it becomes my shadow to do. For I will tell you I’m going to marry the Princess, and this evening the wedding will be held.’

‘Now, that’s too strong !’ said the learned man. ‘I won’t do it ; I won’t have it. That would be cheating the whole country and the Princess too. I’ll tell everything—that I’m the man and you are the Shadow, and that you are only dressed up !’

‘No one would believe that,’ said the Shadow. ‘Be reasonable, or I’ll call the watch.’

‘I’ll go straight to the Princess,’ said the learned man.

‘But I’ll go first,’ said the Shadow ; ‘and you shall go to prison.’

And that was so ; for the sentinels obeyed him who they knew was to marry the Princess.

‘You tremble,’ said the Princess, when the Shadow came to her. ‘Has anything happened ? You must not be ill to-day, when we are to have our wedding.’

‘I have experienced the most terrible thing that can happen,’ said the Shadow. ‘Only think !—such a poor shallow brain cannot bear much—only think ! my shadow has gone mad : he fancies he has become a man, and—only think !—that I am his shadow.’

‘This is terrible !’ said the Princess. ‘He’s locked up, I hope ?’

‘Certainly. I’m afraid he will never recover.’

‘Poor shadow!’ cried the Princess, ‘he’s very unfortunate. It would really be a good action to deliver him from his little bit of life. And when I think it over, properly, I believe it is quite necessary to put him quietly out of the way.’

‘That’s certainly very hard, for he was a faithful servant,’ said the Shadow; and he pretended to sigh.

‘You’ve a noble character,’ said the Princess, and she bowed before him.

In the evening the whole town was illuminated, and cannon were fired—bang!—and the soldiers presented arms. That *was* a wedding! The Princess and the Shadow stepped out on the balcony to show themselves and receive another cheer.

The learned man heard nothing of all this festivity, for he had already been executed.

THE OLD HOUSE

Down yonder, in the street, stood an old, old house. It was almost three hundred years old, for one could read as much on the beam, on which was carved the date of its erection, surrounded by tulips and trailing hops. There one could read entire verses in the characters of olden times, and over each window a face had been carved in the beam, and these made all kinds of strange grimaces. One story projected a long way above the other, and close under the roof was a leaden gutter with a dragon’s head. The rain water was to run out of the dragon’s mouth, but it ran out of the creature’s body instead, for there was a hole in the pipe.

All the other houses in the street were still new and trim, with smooth walls and large window-panes. One could easily see that they would have nothing to do with the old house. They thought perhaps, ‘How long is that old rubbish-heap to stand there, a scandal to the whole street? The parapet stands so far forward that no one can see out of our windows what is going on in that direction. The staircase is as broad as a castle staircase, and as steep as

if it led to a church tower. The iron railing looks like the gate of a family vault, and there are brass bosses upon it. It's too ridiculous !'

Just opposite stood some more new neat houses that thought exactly like the rest ; but here at the window sat a little boy, with fresh red cheeks, with clear sparkling eyes, and he was particularly fond of the old house, in sunshine as well as by moonlight. And when he looked down at the wall where the plaster had fallen off, then he



could sit and fancy all kinds of pictures—how the street must have appeared in old times, with stairs, balconies, and pointed gables ; he could see soldiers with halberds, and roof-gutters running about in the form of dragons and griffins. It was just a good house to look at ; and in it lived an old man who went about in leather knee-breeches, and wore a coat with great brass buttons, and a wig which one could at once see was a real wig. Every morning an old man came to him, to clean his rooms and run on his errands. With this exception the old man in the leather knee-breeches was all alone in the old house. Sometimes he came to one of the windows and looked out, and the little boy nodded to him, and the old man nodded back, and thus

they became acquainted and became friends, though they had never spoken to one another ; but, indeed, that was not at all necessary.

The little boy heard his parents say, 'The old man opposite is very well off, but he is terribly lonely.'

Next Sunday the little boy wrapped something in a piece of paper, went with it to the house door, and said to the man who ran errands for the old gentleman,

'Hark-ye, will you take this to the old gentleman opposite for me ? I have two tin soldiers ; this is one of them, and he shall have it, because I know that he is terribly lonely.'

And the old attendant looked quite pleased, and nodded, and carried the Tin Soldier into the old house. Afterwards he was sent over, to ask if the little boy would not like to come himself and pay a visit. His parents gave him leave ; and so it was that he came to the old house.

The brass bosses on the staircase shone much more brightly than usual ; one would have thought they had been polished in honour of his visit. And it was just as if the carved trumpeters—for on the doors there were carved trumpeters, standing in tulips—were blowing with all their might ; their cheeks looked much rounder than before. Yes, they blew 'Tan-ta-ra-ra ! the little boy's coming ! tan-ta-ra-ra !' and then the door opened. The whole of the hall was hung with old portraits of knights in armour and ladies in silk gowns ; and the armour rattled and the silk dresses rustled ; and then came a staircase that went up a great way and down a little way, and then one came to a balcony which was certainly in a very rickety state, with long cracks and great holes ; but out of all these grew grass and leaves, for the whole balcony, the courtyard, and the wall, were overgrown with so much green that it looked like a garden, but it was only a balcony. Here stood old flower-pots that had faces with asses' ears ; but the flowers grew just as they chose. In one pot pinks were growing over on all sides ; that is to say, the green stalks, sprout upon sprout, and they said quite plainly, 'The air has caressed me and the sun has kissed me, and promised me a little flower for next Sunday, a little flower next Sunday !'

And then they came to a room where the walls were covered with pig-skin, and golden flowers had been stamped on the leather.

‘Flowers fade fast,
But pig-skin will last,’

said the walls. And there stood chairs with quite high backs, with carved work and elbows on each side.

‘Sit down!’ said they. ‘Oh, how it cracks inside me! Now I shall be sure to have the gout, like the old cupboard. Gout in my back, ugh!’

And then the little boy came to the room where the old man sat.

‘Thank you for the Tin Soldier, my little friend,’ said the old man, ‘and thank you for coming over to me.’

‘Thanks! thanks!’ or ‘Crick! crack!’ said all the furniture; there were so many pieces that they almost stood in each other’s way to see the little boy.

And in the middle, on the wall, hung a picture of a beautiful lady, young and cheerful in appearance, but dressed just like people of the old times, with powder in her hair and skirts that stuck out stiffly. She said neither ‘Thanks’ nor ‘Crack’, but looked down upon the little boy with her mild eyes; and he at once asked the old man,

‘Where did you get her from?’

‘From the dealer opposite,’ replied the old man. ‘Many pictures are always hanging there. No one knows them or troubles himself about them, for they are all buried. But many years ago I knew this lady, and now she’s been dead and gone for half a century.’

And under the picture hung, behind glass; a nosegay of withered flowers; they were certainly also half a century old—at least they looked it; and the pendulum of the great clock went to and fro, and the hands turned round, and everything in the room grew older still, but no one noticed it.

‘They say at home,’ said the little boy, ‘that you are always terribly solitary.’

‘Oh,’ answered the old man, ‘old thoughts come, with all that they bring, to visit me; and now you come as well, I’m very well off.’

And then he took from a shelf a book with pictures : there were long processions of wonderful coaches, such as one never sees at the present day, soldiers like the knave of clubs, and citizens with waving flags. The tailors had a flag with shears on it held by two lions, and the shoemakers a flag, without boots, but with an eagle that had two heads ; for among the shoemakers everything must be so arranged that they can say, 'There's a pair.' Yes, that was a picture-book ! And the old man went into the other room, to fetch preserves, and apples, and nuts. It was really glorious in that old house.

'I can't stand it,' said the Tin Soldier, who stood upon the shelf. 'It is terribly lonely and dull here. When a person has been accustomed to family life, one cannot get accustomed to their existence here. I cannot stand it ! The day is long enough, but the evening is longer still ! Here it is not at all as it was in your house opposite, where your father and mother were always conversing cheerfully together, and you and all the other dear children made a famous noise. How solitary it is here at the old man's ! Do you think he gets any kisses ? Do you think he gets friendly looks, or a Christmas tree ? He'll get nothing but a funeral ! I cannot stand it !'

'You must not look at it from the sorrowful side,' said the little boy. 'To me it all appears remarkably pretty, and all the old thoughts, with all they bring with them, come to visit here.'

'Yes, but I don't see them, and don't know them,' objected the Tin Soldier. 'I can't bear it !'

'You must bear it,' said the little boy.

And the old man came with the pleasantest face and with the best of preserved fruits and apples and nuts ; and then the little boy thought no more of the Tin Soldier. Happy and delighted, the youngster went home ; and days went by, weeks went by, and there was much nodding from the boy's home across to the old house and back ; and then the little boy went over there again.

And the carved trumpeters blew, 'Tan-ta-ra-ra ! tan-ta-ra-ra ! there's the little boy, tan-ta-ra-ra !' and the swords and armour on the old pictures rattled, and the silken dresses rustled, and the leather told tales, and the old

chairs had the gout in their backs. Ugh ! it was just like the first time, for over there one day or one hour was just like another.

‘I can’t stand it !’ said the Tin Soldier. ‘I’ve wept tears of tin. It’s too dreary here. I had rather go to war and lose my arms and legs ; at any rate, that’s a change. I cannot stand it ! Now I know what it means to have a visit from one’s old thoughts and all they bring with them. I’ve had visits from my own, and you may believe me, that’s no pleasure in the long run. I was very nearly jumping down from the shelf. I could see you all in the house opposite as plainly as if you had been here. It was Sunday morning, and you children were all standing round the table singing the psalm you sing every morning. You were standing reverently with folded hands, and your father and mother were just as solemn ; then the door opened, and your little sister Maria, who is not two years old yet, and who always dances when she hears music or song, of whatever description they may be, was brought in. She was not to do it, but she immediately began to dance, though she could not get into right time, for the song was too slow, so she first stood on one leg and bent her head quite over in front, but it was not long enough. You all stood very quietly, though that was rather difficult ; but I laughed inwardly, and so I fell down from the table and got a bruise which I have still ; for it was not right of me to laugh. But all this, and all the rest that I have experienced, now passes before my mind’s eye, and those must be the old thoughts with everything they bring with them. Tell me, do you still sing on Sundays ? Tell me something about little Maria. And how is my comrade and brother Tin Soldier ? Yes, he must be very happy. I can’t stand it !’

‘You have been given away,’ said the little boy. ‘You must stay where you are. Don’t you see that ?’

And the old man came with a box in which many things were to be seen : little rouge-pots and scent-boxes ; and old cards, larger and more richly gilt than one ever sees them in these days ; and many large drawers were opened, likewise the piano ; and in this were painted landscapes, inside the lid. But the piano was quite hoarse when the

old man played upon it, and then he hummed a song. 'Yes, she could sing that,' he said, and then he nodded to the picture that he had bought at the dealer's, and the old man's eyes shone quite brightly.

'I'll go to the war! I'll go to the war!' cried the Tin Soldier, as loud as he could, and he threw himself down on the floor.

Where had he gone? The old man searched, the little boy searched, but he was gone, and could not be found.

'I shall find him,' said the old man.

But he never found him: the flooring was so open and full of holes, that the Tin Soldier had fallen through a crack, and there he lay as in an open grave.

And the day passed away, and the little boy went home; and the week passed by, and many weeks passed by. The windows were quite frozen up, and the little boy had to sit and breathe upon the panes, to make a peep-hole to look at the old house; and snow had blown among all the carving and the inscriptions, and covered the whole staircase, as if no one were in the house at all. And, indeed, there *was* no one in the house, for the old man had died!

In the evening a carriage stopped at the door, and in that he was laid, in his coffin; he was to rest in a family vault in the country. So he was carried away; but no one followed him on his last journey, for all his friends were dead. And the little boy kissed his hand after the coffin as it rolled away.

A few days later, and there was an auction in the old house; and the little boy saw from his window how the old knights and ladies, the flower-pots with the long ears, the chairs and the cupboards, were carried away. One was taken here, and another there: *her* portrait, that had been bought from the dealer, went back into his shop, and there it was hung, for no one cared for the old picture.

In the spring the house itself was pulled down, for the people said it was old rubbish. One could look from the street straight into the room with the leather wall-covering, which was taken down, ragged and torn; and the green of the balcony hung straggling over the beams, that threatened to fall in altogether. And now a clearance was made.

‘That is good!’ said the neighbour houses.

And a capital house was built, with large windows and smooth white walls; but in front of the place where the old house had really stood, a little garden was planted, and by the neighbour’s wall tall vine shoots clambered up. In front of the garden was placed a great iron railing with an iron door; and it had a stately look. The people stopped in front, and looked through. And the sparrows sat down in dozens upon the vine branches, and chattered all at once as loud as they could; but not about the old house, for they could not remember that, for many years had gone by—so many, that the little boy had grown to be a man, a thorough man, whose parents rejoiced in him. And he had just married, and was come with his wife to live in the house, in front of which was the garden; and here he stood next to her while she planted a field flower which she considered very pretty; she planted it with her little hand, pressing the earth close round it with her fingers. ‘Ah, what was that?’ She pricked herself. Out of the soft earth something pointed was sticking up. Only think! that was the Tin Soldier, the same that had been lost up in the old man’s room, and had been hidden among old wood and rubbish for a long time, and had lain in the ground many a year. And the young wife first dried the Soldier in a green leaf, and then with her fine handkerchief, that smelt so deliciously. And the Tin Soldier felt just as if he were waking from a fainting fit.

‘Let me see him,’ said the young man. And then he smiled and shook his head. ‘Ah! it can scarcely be the same; but it reminds me of an affair with a Tin Soldier which I had when I was a little boy.’

And then he told his wife about the old house, and the old man, and of the Tin Soldier he had sent across to the old man whom he had thought so lonely; and the tears came into the young wife’s eyes for the old house and the old man.

‘It is possible, after all, that it may be the same Tin Soldier,’ said she. ‘I will take care of him, and remember what you have told me; but you must show me the old man’s grave.’

‘I don’t know where it is,’ replied he, ‘and no one

knows. All his friends were dead ; none tended his grave, and I was but a little boy.'

'Ah, how terribly lonely he must have been !' said she.

'Yes, horribly lonely,' said the Tin Soldier ; 'but it is glorious not to be forgotten.'

'Glorious !' repeated a voice close to them.

But nobody except the Tin Soldier perceived that it came from a rag of the pig's-leather hangings, which was now devoid of all gilding. It looked like wet earth, but yet it had an opinion, which it expressed thus :

'Gilding fades fast,
Pig-skin will last !'

But the Tin Soldier did not believe that.

THE SHIRT COLLAR

THERE was once a rich gentleman whose whole effects consisted of a Bootjack and a Hair-comb, but he had the finest Shirt Collar in the world, and about this Shirt Collar we will tell a story.

The Collar was now old enough to think of marrying, and it happened that he was sent to the wash together with a Garter.

'My word !' exclaimed the Shirt Collar. 'I have never seen anything so slender and delicate, so charming and genteel. May I ask your name ?'

'I shall not tell you that,' said the Garter.

'Where is your home ?' asked the Shirt Collar.

But the Garter was of rather a modest disposition, and it seemed such a strange question to answer.

'I presume you are a girdle ?' said the Shirt Collar—'a sort of under girdle ? I see that you are useful as well as ornamental, my little lady.'

'You are not to speak to me,' said the Garter. 'I have not, I think, given you any occasion to do so.'

'Oh ! when one is as beautiful as you are,' cried the Shirt Collar, 'that is occasion enough.'

‘Go!’ said the Garter; ‘don’t come so near me: you look to me quite like a man.’

‘I am a fine gentleman, too,’ said the Shirt Collar. ‘I possess a bootjack and a hair-comb.’

And that was not true at all, for it was his master who owned these things, but he was boasting.

‘Don’t come too near me,’ said the Garter; ‘I’m not used to that.’

‘Affectation!’ cried the Shirt Collar.

And then they were taken out of the wash, and starched, and hung over a chair in the sunshine, and then laid on the ironing-board; and now came the hot Iron.

‘Mrs. Widow!’ said the Shirt Collar, ‘little Mrs. Widow, I’m getting quite warm; I’m being quite changed; I’m losing all my creases; you’re burning a hole in me! Ugh! I propose to you.’

‘You old rag!’ said the Iron, and rode proudly over the Shirt Collar, for it imagined that it was a steam boiler, and that it ought to be out on the railway, dragging carriages. ‘You old rag!’ said the Iron.

The Shirt Collar was a little frayed at the edges, therefore the Paper Scissors came to smooth away the frayed places.

‘Ho, ho!’ said the Shirt Collar; ‘I presume you are a first-rate dancer. How you can point your toes! no one in the world can do that like you.’

‘I know that,’ said the Scissors.

‘You deserve to be a countess,’ said the Shirt Collar. ‘All that I possess consists of a fine gentleman, a bootjack, and a comb. If I had only an estate!’

‘What! do you want to marry?’ cried the Scissors; and they were angry, and gave such a deep cut that the Collar had to be cashiered.

‘I shall have to propose to the Hair-comb,’ thought the Shirt Collar. ‘It is wonderful how well you keep all your teeth, my little lady. Have you never thought of engaging yourself?’

‘Yes, you can easily imagine that,’ replied the Hair-comb. ‘I am engaged to the Bootjack.’

‘Engaged!’ cried the Shirt Collar.

Now there was no one left to whom he could offer himself, and so he despised love-making.

A long time passed, and the Shirt Collar was put into the sack of a paper-miller. There was a terribly ragged company, and the fine ones kept to themselves, and the coarse ones to themselves, as is right. They all had much to tell, but the Shirt Collar had most of all, for he was a terrible Jack Brag.

‘I have had a tremendous number of sweethearts,’ said the Shirt Collar. ‘They would not leave me alone; but I was a fine gentleman, a starched one. I had a bootjack and a hair-comb that I never used: you should only have seen me then, when I was turned down. I shall never forget my first love; it was a girdle; and how delicate, how charming, how genteel it was! And my first love threw herself into a washing-tub, and all for me! There was also a widow who became quite glowing, but I let her stand alone till she turned quite black. Then there was a dancer who gave me the wound from which I still suffer—she was very hot-tempered. My own hair-comb was in love with me, and lost all her teeth from neglected love. Yes, I’ve had many experiences of this kind; but I am most sorry for the Garter—I mean for the girdle, that jumped into the wash-tub for love of me. I’ve a great deal on my conscience. It’s time I was turned into white paper.’

And to that the Shirt Collar came. All the rags were turned into white paper, but the Shirt Collar became the very piece of paper we see here, and upon which this story has been printed, and that was done because he boasted so dreadfully about things that were not at all true. And this we must remember, so that we may on no account do the same, for we cannot know at all whether we shall not be put into the rag bag and manufactured into white paper, on which our whole history, even the most secret, shall be printed, so that we shall be obliged to run about and tell it, as the Shirt Collar did.

THE FLAX

THE Flax stood in blossom ; it had pretty little blue flowers, smooth as a moth's wings, and even more delicate. The sun shone on the Flax, and the rain clouds moistened it, and this was just as good for it as it is for little children when they are washed, and afterwards get a kiss from their mother ; they become much prettier, and so did the Flax.

'The people say that I stand uncommonly well,' said the Flax, 'and that I'm fine and long, and shall make a capital piece of linen. How happy I am ! I'm certainly the happiest of beings. How well off I am ! And I may come to something ! How the sunshine gladdens, and the rain tastes good and refreshes me ! I'm wonderfully happy ; I'm the happiest of beings.'

'Yes, yes, yes !' said the Hedge-stake. 'You don't know the world, but we do, for we have knots in us ;' and then it creaked out mournfully,

'Snip-snap-snurre,
Basse-lurre !
The song is done.'

'No, it is not done,' said the Flax. 'To-morrow the sun will shine, or the rain will refresh us. I feel that I'm growing, I feel that I'm in blossom ! I'm the happiest of beings.'

But one day the people came and took the Flax by the head and pulled it up by the root. That hurt ; and it was laid in water as if they were going to drown it, and then put on the fire as if it was going to be roasted. It was quite fearful !

'One can't always have good times,' said the Flax. 'One must make one's experiences, and so one gets to know something.'

But bad times certainly came. The Flax was bruised and scutched, and broken and hackled. Yes, it did not even know what the operations were called that they did with it. It was put on the spinning-wheel—whirr ! whirr ! whirr !—it was not possible to collect one's thoughts.

'I have been uncommonly happy !' it thought in all

its pain. 'One must be content with the good one has enjoyed! Contented! contented! Oh!' And it continued to say so even when it was put into the loom, and till it became a large beautiful piece of linen. All the flax, to the last stalk, was used in making one piece.

'But this is quite remarkable! I should never have believed it! How favourable fortune is to me! The Hedge-stake was well informed, truly, with its

Snip-snap-snurre,
Basse-lurre!

The song is not done by any means. Now it's beginning in earnest. That's quite remarkable! If I've suffered something, I've been made into something! I'm the happiest of all! How strong and fine I am, how white and long! That's something different from being a mere plant, even if one has a flower. One is not attended to, and only gets watered when it rains. Now I'm attended to and cherished; the maid turns me over every morning, and I get a shower bath from the watering-pot every evening. Yes, the clergyman's wife has even made a speech about me, and says I'm the best piece in the whole parish. I cannot be happier!'

Now the Linen was taken into the house, and put under the scissors: how they cut and tore it, and then pricked it with needles! That was not pleasant; but twelve pieces of body linen of a kind not often mentioned by name, but indispensable to all people, were made of it—a whole dozen!

'Just look! Now something has really been made of me! So, that was my destiny. That's a real blessing. Now I shall be of some use in the world, and that's right, that's a true pleasure! We've been made into twelve things, but yet we're all one and the same; we're just a dozen: how remarkably charming that is!'

Years rolled on, and now they would hold together no longer.

'It must be over one day,' said each piece. 'I would gladly have held together a little longer, but one must not expect impossibilities.'

They were now torn into pieces and fragments. They thought it was all over now, for they were hacked to shreds,

and softened and boiled ; yes, they themselves did not know all that was done to them ; and then they became beautiful white paper.

‘ Now, that is a surprise, and a glorious surprise ! ’ said the Paper. ‘ Now I’m finer than before, and I shall be written on : that is remarkably good fortune.’

And really the most beautiful stories and verses were written upon it, and the people heard what was upon it ; it was sensible and good, and made people much more sensible and good : there was a great blessing in the words that were on this Paper.

‘ That is more than I ever imagined when I was a little blue flower in the fields. How could I fancy that I should ever spread joy and knowledge among men ? I can’t yet understand it myself, but it is really so. I have done nothing myself but what I was obliged with my weak powers to do for my own preservation, and yet I have been promoted from one joy and honour to another. Each time when I think “ the song is done,” it begins again in a higher and better way. Now I shall certainly be sent about to journey through the world, so that all people may read me. That is the only probable thing. I’ve splendid thoughts, as many as I had pretty flowers in the old times. I’m the happiest of beings.’

But the Paper was not sent on its travels, it was sent to the printer, and everything that was written upon it was set up in type for a book, or rather for many hundreds of books, for in this way a very far greater number could derive pleasure and profit from the book than if the one paper on which it was written had run about the world, to be worn out before it had got half-way.

‘ Yes, that is certainly the wisest way,’ thought the Written Paper. ‘ I really did not think of that. I shall stay at home, and be held in honour, just like an old grandfather. It was on me the writing was done ; the words flowed from the pen right into me. I remain here and the books run about. Now something can really be done. I am the happiest of all.’

Then the Paper was tied together in a bundle, and put on a shelf.

‘ It’s good resting after work,’ said the Paper. ‘ It is

very right that one should collect one's thoughts. Now I'm able for the first time to think of what is in me, and to know oneself is true progress. What will be done with me now ? At any rate I shall go forward again : I'm always going forward.'

One day all the paper was laid on the hearth in order to be burnt, for it must not be sold to the grocer to wrap up butter and sugar. And all the children in the house stood round ; they wanted to see it blaze, they wanted to see among the ashes the many red sparks, which seemed to dart off and go out, one after the other, so quickly. These



are the children going out of school, and the last spark of all is the schoolmaster : one often thinks he has gone already, but he always comes a little after all the others. All the old Paper, the whole bundle, was laid upon the fire, and it was soon alight. ' Ugh ! ' it said, and burst out into bright flame that mounted up higher than the Flax had ever been able to lift its little blue flowers, and glittered as the white Linen had never been able to glitter. All the written letters turned for a moment quite red, and all the words and thoughts turned to flame.

' Now I'm mounting straight up to the sun,' said a voice in the flame ; and it was as if a thousand voices said this in unison ; and the flames mounted up through the chimney

and out at the top, and more delicate than the flames, invisible to human eyes, little tiny beings floated there, as many as there had been blossoms on the Flax. They were lighter even than the flame from which they were born ; and when the flame was extinguished, and nothing remained of the Paper but black ashes, they danced over it once more, and where they touched the black mass the little red sparks appeared. The children came out of school, and the schoolmaster was the last of all. That was fun ! and the children sang over the dead ashes—

‘ Snip-snap-snurre,
Basse-lurre !
The song is done.’

But the little invisible beings all said,

‘ The song is never done, that is the best of all. I know it, and therefore I’m the happiest of all.’

But the children could neither hear that nor understand it, nor ought they, for children must not know everything.

‘ THERE IS A DIFFERENCE ’

It was in the month of May. The wind still blew cold, but bushes and trees, field and meadow, all alike said the spring had come. There was store of flowers even in the wild hedges ; and there spring carried on his affairs, and preached from a little apple tree, where one branch hung fresh and blooming, covered with delicate pink blossoms that were just ready to open. The Apple Tree Branch knew well enough how beautiful he was, for the knowledge is inherent in the blade as well as in the blood ; and consequently the Branch was not surprised when a nobleman’s carriage stopped opposite to him on the road, and the young countess said that that apple branch was the loveliest thing one could behold, a very emblem of spring in its most charming form. And the Branch was broken off, and she held it in her delicate hand, and sheltered it with her silk parasol. Then they drove to the castle, where there were lofty halls and splendid apartments. Pure white curtains fluttered round the open windows, and beautiful

flowers stood in shining transparent vases ; and in one of these, which looked as if it had been cut out of fresh-fallen snow, the Apple Branch was placed among some fresh light twigs of beech. It was charming to behold. But the Branch became proud ; and this was quite like human nature.

People of various kinds came through the room, and according to their rank they might express their admiration. A few said nothing at all, and others again said too much, and the Apple Tree Branch soon got to understand that there was a difference in human beings just as among plants.

'Some are created for beauty, and some for use ; and there are some which one can do without altogether,' thought the Apple Branch.

And as he stood just in front of the open window, from whence he could see into the garden and across the fields, he had flowers and plants enough to contemplate and to think about, for there were rich plants and humble plants—some very humble indeed.

'Poor despised herbs !' said the Apple Branch. 'There is certainly a difference ! And how unhappy they must feel, if indeed that kind *can* feel like myself and my equals. Certainly there is a difference, and distinctions must be made, or we should all be equal.'

And the Apple Branch looked down with a species of pity, especially upon a certain kind of flower of which great numbers are found in the fields and in ditches. No one bound them into a nosegay, they were too common ; for they might be found even among the paving-stones, shooting up everywhere like the rankest weeds, and they had the ugly name of 'dandelion', or 'the devil's milk-pail'.

'Poor despised plants !' said the Apple Branch. 'It is not your fault that you are what you are, that you are so common, and that you received the ugly name you bear. But it is with plants as with men—there must be a difference !'

'A difference ?' said the Sunbeam ; and he kissed the blooming Apple Branch, but also kissed the yellow dandelions out in the field—all the brothers of the Sunbeam kissed them, the poor flowers as well as the rich.

Now the Apple Branch had never thought of the boundless beneficence of Providence in creation towards everything that lives and moves and has its being ; he had never thought how much that is beautiful and good may be hidden, but not forgotten ; but that, too, was quite like human nature.

The Sunbeam, the ray of light, knew better, and said, ‘ You don’t see far and you don’t see clearly. What is the despised plant that you especially pity ? ’

‘ The dandelion,’ replied the Apple Branch. ‘ It is never received into a nosegay ; it is trodden under foot. There are too many of them ; and when they run to seed, they fly away like little pieces of wool over the roads, and hang and cling to people’s dress. They are nothing but weeds—but it is right there should be weeds too. Oh, I’m really very thankful that I was not created one of those flowers.’

But there came across the fields a whole troop of children, the youngest of whom was so small that it was carried by the rest, and when it was set down in the grass among the yellow flowers it laughed aloud with glee, kicked out with its little legs, rolled about and plucked the yellow flowers, and kissed them in its pretty innocence. The elder children broke off the flowers with their hollow stalks, and bent the stalks round into one another, link by link, so that a whole chain was made ; first a necklace, and then a scarf to hang over their shoulders and tie round their waists, and then a chaplet to wear on the head : it was quite a gala of green links and chains. The eldest children carefully gathered the stalks on which hung the white feathery ball, formed by the flower that had run to seed ; and this loose, airy wool-flower, which is a beautiful object, looking like the finest snowy down, they held to their mouths, and tried to blow away the whole head at one breath ; for their grandmother had said that whoever could do this would be sure to get new clothes before the year was out. So on this occasion the despised flower was a perfect prophet.

‘ Do you see ? ’ said the Sunbeam. ‘ Do you see the beauty of those flowers ? do you see their power ? ’

‘ Yes—over children,’ replied the Apple Branch.

And now an old woman came into the field, and began to dig with a blunt shaftless knife round the root of the

dandelion plant, and pulled it up out of the ground. With some of the roots she intended to make coffee for herself ; others she was going to sell for money to the druggist.

'But beauty is a higher thing !' said the Apple Tree Branch. 'Only the chosen few can be admitted into the realm of beauty. There is a difference among plants, just as there is a difference among men.'

And then the Sunbeam spoke of the boundless love of the Creator, as manifested in the creation, and of the just distribution of things in time and in eternity.

'Yes, yes, that is your opinion,' the Apple Branch persisted.

But now some people came into the room, and the beautiful young countess appeared, the lady who had placed the Apple Branch in the transparent vase in the sunlight. She carried in her hand a flower, or something of the kind. The object, whatever it might be, was hidden by three or four great leaves, wrapped around it like a shield, that no draught or gust of wind should injure it ; and it was carried more carefully than the Apple Bough had been. Very gently the large leaves were now removed, and lo, there appeared the fine feathery seed crown of the despised dandelion ! This it was that the lady had plucked with the greatest care, and had carried home with every precaution, so that not one of the delicate feathery darts that form its downy ball should be blown away. She now produced it, quite uninjured, and admired its beautiful form, its peculiar construction, and its airy beauty, which was to be scattered by the wind.

'Look, with what singular beauty Providence has invested it,' she said. 'I will paint it, together with the Apple Branch, whose beauty all have admired ; but this humble flower has received just as much from Heaven in a different way ; and, various as they are, both are children of the kingdom of beauty.'

And the Sunbeam kissed the humble flower, and he kissed the blooming Apple Branch whose leaves appeared to blush thereat.

THE STORY OF THE YEAR

It was far in January, and a terrible fall of snow was pelting down. The snow eddied through the streets and lanes ; the window-panes seemed plastered with snow on the outside ; snow plumped down in masses from the roofs : and a sudden hurry had seized on the people, for they ran, and jostled, and fell into each other's arms, and as they clutched each other fast for a moment, they felt that they were safe at least for that length of time. Coaches and horses seemed frosted with sugar. The footmen stood with their backs against the carriages, so as to turn their faces from the wind. The foot passengers kept in the shelter of the carriages, which could only move slowly on in the deep snow ; and when the storm at last abated, and a narrow path was swept clean alongside the houses, the people stood still in this path when they met, for none liked to take the first step aside into the deep snow to let the other pass him. Thus they stood silent and motionless, till, as if by tacit consent, each sacrificed one leg, and, stepping aside, buried it in the deep snow-heap.

Towards evening it grew calm. The sky looked as if it had been swept, and had become more lofty and transparent. The stars looked as if they were quite new, and some of them were amazingly bright and pure. It froze so hard that the snow creaked, and the upper rind of snow might well have grown hard enough to bear the Sparrows in the morning dawn. These little birds hopped up and down where the sweeping had been done ; but they found very little food, and were not a little cold.

'Piep !' said one of them to another ; ' they call this a new year, and it is worse than the last ! We might just as well have kept the old one. I'm dissatisfied, and I've reason to be so.'

' Yes ; and the people ran about and fired off shots to celebrate the New Year,' said a shivering little Sparrow ; ' and they threw pans and pots against the doors, and were quite boisterous with joy because the Old Year was gone. I was glad of it too, because I hoped we should have had warm days ; but that has come to nothing—it freezes

much harder than before. People have made a mistake in reckoning the time !’

‘That they have !’ a third put in, who was old, and had a white poll : ‘they’ve something they call the calendar—it’s an invention of their own—and everything is to be arranged according to that ; but it won’t do. When spring comes, then the year begins—that is the course of nature.’

‘But when will spring come ?’ the others inquired.

‘It will come when the stork comes back. But his movements are very uncertain, and here in town no one knows anything about it : in the country they are better informed. Shall we fly out there and wait ? There, at any rate, we shall be nearer to spring.’

‘Yes, that may be all very well,’ observed one of the Sparrows, who had been hopping about for a long time, chirping, without saying anything decided. ‘I’ve found a few comforts here in town, which I am afraid I should miss out in the country. Near this neighbourhood, in a courtyard, there lives a family of people, who have taken the very sensible notion of placing three or four flower-pots against the wall, with their mouths all turned inwards, and the bottom of each pointing outwards. In each flower-pot a hole has been cut, big enough for me to fly in and out at it. I and my husband have built a nest in one of those pots, and have brought up our young family there. The family of people of course made the whole arrangement that they might have the pleasure of seeing us, or else they would not have done it. To please themselves they also strew crumbs of bread ; and so we have food, and are in a manner provided for. So I think my husband and I will stay where we are, although we are very dissatisfied—but we shall stay.’

‘And we will fly into the country to see if spring is not coming !’

And away they flew.

Out in the country it was hard winter, and the glass was a few degrees lower than in the town. The sharp winds swept across the snow-covered fields. The farmer, muffled in warm mittens, sat in his sledge, and beat his arms across his breast to warm himself, and the whip lay

across his knees. The horses ran till they smoked again. The snow creaked, and the Sparrows hopped about in the ruts, and shivered, 'Piep! when will spring come? it is very long in coming!'

'Very long,' sounded from the next snow-covered hill, far over the field. It might be the echo which was heard; or perhaps the words were spoken by yonder wonderful old man, who sat in wind and weather high on the heap of snow. He was quite white, attired like a peasant in a coarse white coat of frieze; he had long white hair, and was quite pale, with big blue eyes.

'Who is that old man yonder?' asked the Sparrows.

'I know who he is,' quoth an old Raven, who sat on the fence-rail, and was condescending enough to acknowledge that we are all like little birds in the sight of Heaven, and therefore was not above speaking to the Sparrows, and giving them information. 'I know who the old man is. It is Winter, the old man of last year. He is not dead, as the calendar says, but is guardian to little Prince Spring, who is to come. Yes, Winter bears sway here. Ugh! the cold makes you shiver, does it not, you little ones?'

'Yes. Did I not tell the truth?' said the smallest Sparrow: 'the calendar is only an invention of man, and is not arranged according to nature! They ought to leave these things to us, who are born cleverer than they.'

And one week passed away, and two passed away. The forest was black, the frozen lake lay hard and stiff, looking like a sheet of lead, and damp icy mists lay brooding over the land; the great black crows flew about in long lines, but silently; and it seemed as if nature slept. Then a sun-beam glided along over the lake, and made it shine like burnished tin. The snowy covering on the field and on the hill did not glitter as it had done; but the white form, Winter himself, still sat there, his gaze fixed unswervingly upon the south. He did not notice that the snowy carpet seemed to sink as it were into the earth, and that here and there a little grass-green patch appeared, and that all these patches were crowded with Sparrows, which cried, 'Kee-wit! kee-wit! Is spring coming now?'

'Spring!' The cry resounded over field and meadow, and through the black-brown woods, where the moss still

glimmered in bright green upon the tree trunks; and from the south the first two storks came flying through



the air. On the back of each sat a pretty little child—one was a girl and the other a boy. They greeted the

earth with a kiss, and wherever they set their feet, white flowers grew up from beneath the snow. Then they went hand in hand to the old ice man, Winter, clung to his breast embracing him, and in a moment they, and he, and all the region around were hidden in a thick damp mist, dark and heavy, that closed over all like a veil. Gradually the wind rose, and now it rushed roaring along, and drove away the mist, so that the sun shone warmly forth, and Winter himself vanished, and the beautiful children of Spring sat on the throne of the year.

‘That’s what I call New Year,’ cried each of the Sparrows. ‘Now we shall get our rights, and have amends for the stern winter.’

Wherever the two children turned, green buds burst forth on bushes and trees, the grass shot upwards, and the corn-fields turned green and became more and more lovely. And the little maiden strewed flowers all around. Her apron, which she held up before her, was always full of them; they seemed to spring up there, for her lap continued full, however zealously she strewed the blossoms around; and in her eagerness she scattered a snow of blossoms over apple trees and peach trees, so that they stood in full beauty before their green leaves had fairly come forth.

And she clapped her hands, and the boy clapped his, and then flocks of birds came flying up, nobody knew whence, and they all twittered and sang, ‘Spring has come.’

That was beautiful to behold. Many an old granny crept forth over the threshold into the sunshine, and tripped gleefully about, casting a glance at the yellow flowers which shone everywhere in the fields, just as they used to do when she was young. The world grew young again to her, and she said, ‘It is a blessed day out here to-day!’

The forest still wore its brown-green dress, made of buds; but the woodruff was already there, fresh and fragrant; there were violets in plenty, anemones and primroses came forth, and there was sap and strength in every blade of grass. That was certainly a beautiful carpet to sit upon, and there accordingly the young spring pair sat hand in hand, and sang and smiled, and grew on.

A mild rain fell down upon them from the sky, but they did not notice it, for the rain-drops were mingled with their own tears of joy. They kissed each other as bride and bridegroom, and in the same moment the verdure of the woods was unfolded, and when the sun rose, the forest stood there arrayed in green.

And hand in hand the betrothed pair wandered under the pendent roof of fresh leaves, where the rays of the sun gleamed through the green in lovely, ever-changing hues. What virgin purity, what refreshing balm in the delicate leaves ! The brooks and streams rippled clearly and merrily among the green velvety rushes and over the coloured pebbles. All nature seemed to say, 'There is plenty, and there shall be plenty always !' And the cuckoo sang and the lark carolled : it was a charming spring ; but the willows had woolly gloves over their blossoms ; they were desperately careful, and that is tiresome.

And days went by and weeks went by, and the heat came as it were rolling down. Hot waves of air came through the corn, that became yellower and yellower. The white water-lily of the North spread its great green leaves over the glassy mirror of the woodland lakes, and the fishes sought out the shady spots beneath ; and at the sheltered side of the wood, where the sun shone down upon the walls of the farm-house, warming the blooming roses, and the cherry trees, which hung full of juicy black berries, almost hot with the fierce beams, there sat the lovely wife of Summer, the same being whom we have seen as a child and as a bride ; and her glance was fixed upon the black gathering clouds, which in wavy outlines—blue-black and heavy—were piling themselves up, like mountains, higher and higher. They came from three sides, and growing like a petrified sea, they came swooping towards the forest, where every sound had been silenced as if by magic. Every breath of air was hushed, every bird was mute. There was a seriousness—a suspense throughout all nature ; but in the highways and lanes, foot-passengers, and riders, and men in carriages, were hurrying on to get under shelter. Then suddenly there was a flashing of light, as if the sun were burst forth—flaming, burning, all-devouring ! And the darkness returned amid a rolling crash. The rain

poured down in streams, and there was alternate darkness and blinding light ; alternate silence and deafening clamour. The young, brown, feathery reeds on the moor moved to and fro in long waves, the twigs of the woods were hidden in a mist of waters, and still came darkness and light, and still silence and roaring followed one another ; the grass and corn lay beaten down and swamped, looking as though they could never raise themselves again. But soon the rain fell only in gentle drops, the sun peered through the clouds, the water-drops glittered like pearls on the leaves, the birds sang, the fishes leaped up from the surface of the lake, the gnats danced in the sunshine, and yonder on the rock, in the salt heaving sea-water, sat Summer himself—a strong man with sturdy limbs and long dripping hair—there he sat, strengthened by the cool bath, in the warm sunshine. All nature round about was renewed, everything stood luxuriant, strong, and beautiful ; it was summer, warm, lovely summer.

And pleasant and sweet was the fragrance that streamed upwards from the rich clover-field, where the bees swarmed round the old ruined place of meeting : the bramble wound itself around the altar stone, which, washed by the rain, glittered in the sunshine ; and thither flew the Queen-bee with her swarm, and prepared wax and honey. Only Summer saw it, he and his strong wife ; for them the altar table stood covered with the offerings of nature.

And the evening sky shone like gold, shone as no church dome can shine ; and in the interval between the evening and the morning red there was moonlight : it was summer.

And days went by, and weeks went by. The bright scythes of the reapers gleamed in the corn-fields ; the branches of the apple trees bent down, heavy with red-and-yellow fruit. The hops smelt sweetly, hanging in large clusters ; and under the hazel bushes, where hung great bunches of nuts, rested a man and woman—Summer and his quiet consort.

‘What wealth !’ exclaimed the woman : ‘all around a blessing is diffused, everywhere the scene looks homelike and good ; and yet—I know not why—I long for peace and rest—I know not how to express it. Now they are already ploughing again in the field. The people want to

gain more and more. See, the storks flock together, and follow at a little distance behind the plough—the bird of Egypt that carried us through the air. Do you remember how we came as children to this land of the North? We brought with us flowers, and pleasant sunshine, and green to the woods; the wind has treated them roughly, and they have become dark and brown like the trees of the South, but they do not, like them, bear golden fruit.’

‘Do you wish to see the golden fruit?’ said Summer: ‘then rejoice.’

And he lifted his arm, and the leaves of the forest put on hues of red and gold, and beauteous tints spread over all the woodland. The rose bush gleamed with scarlet hips; the elder-branches hung down with great heavy bunches of dark berries; the wild chestnuts fell ripe from their dark husks; and in the depths of the forests the violets bloomed for the second time.

But the Queen of the Year became more and more silent, and paler and paler.

‘It blows cold,’ she said, ‘and night brings damp mists. I long for the land of my childhood.’

And she saw the storks fly away, one and all; and she stretched forth her hands towards them. She looked up at the nests, which stood empty. In one of them the long-stalked cornflower was growing; in another, the yellow mustard-seed, as if the nest were only there for its protection; and the Sparrows were flying up into the storks’ nests.

‘Piep! where has the master gone? I suppose he can’t bear it when the wind blows, and that therefore he has left the country. I wish him a pleasant journey!’

The forest leaves became more and more yellow, leaf fell down upon leaf, and the stormy winds of autumn howled. The year was now far advanced, and the Queen of the Year reclined upon the fallen yellow leaves, and looked with mild eyes at the gleaming star, and her husband stood by her. A gust swept through the leaves, it fell again, and the Queen was gone, but a butterfly, the last of the season, flew through the cold air.

The wet fogs came, an icy wind blew, and the long dark nights drew on apace. The Ruler of the Year stood there with locks white as snow, but he knew not it was his hair

that gleamed so white—he thought snowflakes were falling from the clouds ; and soon a thin covering of snow was spread over the fields.

And then the church bells rang for the Christmas-time.

‘The bells ring for the new-born,’ said the Ruler of the Year. ‘Soon the new King and Queen will be born ; and I shall go to rest, as my wife has done—to rest in the gleaming star.’

And in the fresh green fir-wood, where the snow lay, stood the Angel of Christmas, and consecrated the young trees that were to adorn his feast.

‘May there be joy in the room and under the green boughs,’ said the Ruler of the Year. In a few weeks he had become a very old man, white as snow. ‘My time for rest draws near, and the young pair of the year shall now receive my crown and sceptre.’

‘But the might is still thine,’ said the Angel of Christmas ; ‘the might and not the rest. Let the snow lie warmly upon the young seed. Learn to bear it, that another receives homage while thou yet reignest. Learn to bear being forgotten while thou art yet alive. The hour of thy release will come when spring appears.’

‘And when will spring come ? ’ asked Winter.

‘It will come when the stork returns.’

And with white locks and snowy beard, cold, bent, and hoary, but strong as the wintry storm and firm as ice, old Winter sat on the snowy drift on the hill, looking towards the south, as the Winter before had sat and gazed. The ice cracked, the snow creaked, the skaters skimmed to and fro on the smooth lakes, ravens and crows stood out well against the white ground, and not a breath of wind stirred. And in the quiet air old Winter clenched his fists, and the ice was fathoms thick between land and land.

Then the Sparrows came again out of the town, and asked, ‘Who is that old man yonder ? ’

And the Raven sat there again, or a son of his, which comes to quite the same thing, and answered them and said, ‘It is Winter, the old man of last year. He is not dead, as the almanac says, but he is the guardian of Spring, who is coming.’

‘When will spring come ? ’ asked the Sparrows. ‘Then

we shall have good times and a better rule. The old one was worth nothing.'

And Winter nodded in quiet thought at the leafless forest, where every tree showed the graceful form and bend of its twigs; and during the winter sleep the icy mists of the clouds came down, and the ruler dreamed of his youthful days, and of the time of his manhood; and towards the morning dawn the whole wood was clothed in glittering hoar frost. That was the summer dream of Winter, and the sun scattered the hoar frost from the boughs.

'When will spring come?' asked the Sparrows.

'The spring!' sounded like an echo from the hills on which the snow lay. The sun shone warmer, the snow melted, and the birds twittered, 'Spring is coming!'

And aloft through the air came the first stork, and the second followed him. A lovely child sat on the back of each, and they alighted on the field, kissed the earth, and kissed the old silent man, and he disappeared, shrouded in the cloudy mist. And the story of the year was done.

'That is all very well,' said the Sparrows; 'it is very beautiful too, but it is not according to the almanac, and therefore it is irregular.'

THE GOBLIN AND THE HUCKSTER

THERE was once a regular student: he lived in a garret, and nothing at all belonged to him; but there was also once a regular huckster: he lived on the ground floor, and the whole house was his; and the Goblin lodged with him, for here, every Christmas-eve, there was a dish of porridge, with a great piece of butter floating in the middle. The huckster could give that, and consequently the Goblin stuck to the huckster's shop, and that was very interesting.

One evening the student came through the back door to buy candles and cheese for himself. He had no one to send, and that's why he came himself. He procured what he wanted and paid for it, and the huckster and his

wife both nodded a 'good evening' to him; and the woman was one who could do more than merely nod—she had an immense power of tongue! And the student nodded too, and then suddenly stood still, reading the sheet of paper in which the cheese had been wrapped. It was a leaf torn out of an old book, a book that ought not to have been torn up, a book that was full of poetry.

'There lies more of it,' said the huckster: 'I gave an old woman a few coffee beans for it; give me three pence and you shall have the remainder.'

'Thanks,' said the student, 'give me the book instead of the cheese: I can eat my bread and butter without cheese. It would be a sin to tear the book up entirely. You are a capital man, a practical man, but you understand no more about poetry than does that cask yonder.'

Now, that was an impolite speech, especially towards the cask; but the huckster laughed and the student laughed, for it was only said in fun. But the Goblin was angry that any one should dare to say such things to a huckster who lived in his own house and sold the best butter.

When it was night, and the shop was closed and all were in bed except the student, the Goblin came forth, went into the bedroom, and took away the good lady's tongue; for she did not want that while she was asleep; and whenever he put this tongue upon any object in the room, the said object acquired speech and language, and could express its thoughts and feelings as well as the lady herself could have done; but only one object could use it at a time, and that was a good thing, otherwise they would have interrupted each other.

And the Goblin laid the tongue upon the Cask in which the old newspapers were lying.

'Is it true,' he asked, 'that you don't know what poetry means?'

'Of course I know it,' replied the Cask: 'poetry is something that always stands at the foot of a column in the newspapers, and is sometimes cut out. I dare swear I have more of it in me than the student, and I'm only a poor tub compared to the huckster.'

Then the Goblin put the tongue upon the coffee-mill, and, mercy! how it began to go! And he put it upon the butter-

cask, and on the cashbox: they were all of the waste-paper Cask's opinion, and the opinion of the majority must be respected.

'Now I shall tell it to the student!'

And with these words the Goblin went quite quietly up the back stairs to the garret, where the student lived. The



student had still a candle burning, and the Goblin peeped through the keyhole, and saw that he was reading in the torn book from downstairs.

But how light it was in his room! Out of the book shot a clear beam, expanding into a thick stem, and into a mighty tree, which grew upward and spread its branches far over the student. Each leaf was fresh, and every blossom was a beautiful girl's head, some with dark sparkling eyes, others with wonderfully clear blue orbs; every fruit was a gleaming star, and there was a glorious sound of song in the student's room.

Never had the little Goblin imagined such splendour, far less had he ever seen or heard anything like it. He stood

still on tiptoe, and peeped in till the light went out in the student's garret. Probably the student blew it out, and went to bed ; but the little Goblin remained standing there nevertheless, for the music still sounded on, soft and beautiful—a splendid cradle song for the student who had lain down to rest.

‘This is an incomparable place,’ said the Goblin : ‘I never expected such a thing ! I should like to stay here with the student.’

And then he thought it over—and thought sensibly ; then he sighed, ‘The student has no porridge !’ And then he went down again to the huckster's shop : and it was a very good thing that he got down there again at last, for the Cask had almost worn out the good woman's tongue, for it had spoken out at one side everything that was contained in it, and was just about turning itself over, to give it out from the other side also, when the Goblin came in, and restored the tongue to its owner. But from that time forth the whole shop, from the cashbox down to the firewood, took its tone from the Cask, and paid him such respect, and thought so much of him, that when the huckster afterwards read the critical articles on theatricals and art in the newspaper, they were persuaded the information came from the Cask itself.

But the Goblin could no longer sit quietly and contentedly listening to all the wisdom down there : as soon as the light glimmered from the garret in the evening, he felt as if the rays were strong cables drawing him up, and he was obliged to go and peep through the keyhole ; and there a feeling of greatness rolled around him, such as we feel beside the ever-heaving sea when the storm rushes over it, and he burst into tears ! He did not know himself why he was weeping, but a peculiar feeling of pleasure mingled with his tears. How wonderfully glorious it must be to sit with the student under the same tree ! But that might not be—he was obliged to be content with the view through the keyhole, and to be glad of that. There he stood on the cold landing-place, with the autumn wind blowing down from the loft-hole : it was cold, very cold ; but the little mannikin only felt that when the light in the room was extinguished and the tones in the tree died away. Ha !

then he shivered, and crept down again to his warm corner, where it was homely and comfortable.

And when Christmas came, and brought with it the porridge and the great lump of butter, why, then he thought the huckster the better man.

But in the middle of the night the Goblin was awakened by a terrible tumult and knocking against the window-shutters. People rapped noisily without, and the watchman blew his horn, for a great fire had broken out—the whole street was full of smoke and flame. Was it in the house itself or at a neighbour's? Where was it? Terror seized on all. The huckster's wife was so bewildered that she took her gold earrings out of her ears and put them in her pocket, that at any rate she might save something; the huckster ran up for his share-papers, and the maid for her black silk mantilla, for she had found means to purchase one. Each wanted to save the best thing they possessed; the Goblin wanted to do the same thing, and in a few leaps he was up the stairs and into the room of the student, who stood quite quietly at the open window, looking at the conflagration that was raging in the house of the neighbour opposite. The Goblin seized upon the wonderful book which lay upon the table, popped it into his red cap, and held the cap tight with both hands. The best treasure of the house was saved; and now he ran up and away, quite on to the roof of the house, on to the chimney. There he sat, illuminated by the flames of the burning house opposite, both hands pressed tightly over his cap, in which the treasure lay; and now he knew the real feelings of his heart, and knew to whom it really belonged. But when the fire was extinguished, and the Goblin could think calmly again, why, then . . .

‘I must divide myself between the two,’ he said; ‘I can’t quite give up the huckster, because of the porridge!’

Now, that was spoken quite like a human creature. We all of us visit the huckster for the sake of the porridge.

IN A THOUSAND YEARS

YES, in a thousand years people will fly on the wings of steam through the air, over the ocean ! The young inhabitants of America will become visitors of old Europe. They will come over to see the monuments and the great cities, which will then be in ruins, just as we in our time make pilgrimages to the mouldering splendours of Southern Asia. In a thousand years they will come !

The Thames, the Danube, and the Rhine still roll their course, Mont Blanc stands firm with its snow-capped summit, and the Northern Lights gleam over the lands of the North ; but generation after generation has become dust, whole rows of the mighty of the moment are forgotten, like those who already slumber under the grave-mound on which the rich trader whose ground it is has built a bench, on which he can sit and look out across his waving cornfields.

‘ To Europe ! ’ cry the young sons of America ; ‘ to the land of our ancestors, the glorious land of memories and fancy—to Europe ! ’

The ship of the air comes. It is crowded with passengers, for the transit is quicker than by sea. The electro-magnetic wire under the ocean has already telegraphed the number of the aerial caravan. Europe is in sight : it is the coast of Ireland that they see, but the passengers are still asleep ; they will not be called till they are exactly over England. There they will first step on European shore, in the land of Shakespeare as the educated call it ; in the land of politics, the land of machinery, as it is called by others.

Here they stay a whole day. That is all the time the busy race can devote to the whole of England and Scotland. Then the journey is continued through the tunnel under the English Channel, to France, the land of Charlemagne and Napoleon. Molière is named : the learned men talk of a classical and romantic school of remote antiquity : there is rejoicing and shouting for the names of heroes, poets, and men of science, whom our time does not know, but who will be born after our time in Paris, the crater of Europe.

The air steamboat flies over the country whence Columbus went forth, where Cortez was born, and where Calderon sang dramas in sounding verse. Beautiful black-eyed women live still in the blooming valleys, and ancient songs speak of the Cid and the Alhambra.

Then through the air, over the sea, to Italy, where once lay old, everlasting Rome. It has vanished! The Campagna lies desert: a single ruined wall is shown as the remains of St. Peter's, but there is a doubt if this ruin be genuine.

Next to Greece, to sleep a night in the grand hotel at the top of Mount Olympus, to say that they have been there; and the journey is continued to the Bosphorus, to rest there a few hours, and see the place where Byzantium lay; and where the legend tells that the harem stood in the time of the Turks, poor fishermen are now spreading their nets.

Over the remains of mighty cities on the broad Danube, cities which we in our time know not, the travellers pass; but here and there, on the rich sites of those that time shall bring forth, the caravan sometimes descends, and departs thence again.

Down below lies Germany, that was once covered with a close net of railways and canals, the region where Luther spoke, where Goethe sang, and Mozart once held the sceptre of harmony. Great names shone there, in science and in art, names that are unknown to us. One day devoted to seeing Germany, and one for the North, the country of Oersted and Linnæus, and for Norway, the land of the old heroes and the young Normans. Iceland is visited on the journey home: Geyser boils no longer, Hecla is an extinct volcano, but the rocky island is still fixed in the midst of the foaming sea, a continual monument of legend and poetry.

'There is really a great deal to be seen in Europe,' says the young American, 'and we have seen it in a week, according to the directions of the great traveller' (and here he mentions the name of one of his contemporaries) 'in his celebrated work, "How to See all Europe in a Week."'

FIVE OUT OF ONE POD

THERE were five peas in one pod : they were green, and the pod was green, and so they thought all the world was green ; and that was just as it should be ! The pod grew, and the peas grew ; they accommodated themselves to circumstances, sitting all in a row. The sun shone without, and warmed the husk, and the rain made it clear and transparent ; it was mild and agreeable during the clear day and dark during the night, just as it should be, and the peas as they sat there became bigger and bigger, and more and more thoughtful, for something they must do.

‘Are we to sit here everlastingly ?’ asked one. ‘I’m afraid we shall become hard by long sitting. It seems to me there must be something outside—I have a kind of inkling of it.’

And weeks went by. The peas became yellow, and the pod also.

‘All the world’s turning yellow,’ said they ; and they had a right to say it.

Suddenly they felt a tug at the pod. It was torn off, passed through human hands, and glided down into the pocket of a jacket, in company with other full pods.

‘Now we shall soon be opened !’ they said ; and that is just what they were waiting for.

‘I should like to know who of us will get farthest !’ said the smallest of the five. ‘Yes, now it will soon show itself.’

‘What is to be will be,’ said the biggest.

‘Crack !’ the pod burst, and all the five peas rolled out into the bright sunshine. There they lay in a child’s hand. A little boy was clutching them, and said they were fine peas for his pea-shooter ; and he put one in at once and shot it out.

‘Now I’m flying out into the wide world, catch me if you can !’ And he was gone.

‘I,’ said the second, ‘I shall fly straight into the sun. That’s a pod worth looking at, and one that exactly suits me.’ And away he went.

‘We sleep where we come,’ said the two next, ‘but we shall roll on all the same.’ And so they rolled first on the floor before they got into the pea-shooter; but they were put in for all that. ‘We shall go farthest,’ said they.

‘What is to happen will happen,’ said the last, as he was shot forth out of the pea-shooter; and he flew up against the old board under the garret window, just into a crack which was filled up with moss and soft mould; and the moss closed round him; there he lay, a prisoner indeed, but not forgotten by our Lord.

‘What is to happen will happen,’ said he.

Within, in the little garret, lived a poor woman, who went out in the day to clean stoves, saw wood, and to do other hard work of the same kind, for she was strong and industrious too. But she always remained poor; and at home in the garret lay her half-grown only daughter, who was very delicate and weak; for a whole year she had kept her bed, and it seemed as if she could neither live nor die.

‘She is going to her little sister,’ the woman said. ‘I had only the two children, and it was not an easy thing to provide for both, but the good God provided for one of them by taking her home to Himself; now I should be glad to keep the other that was left me; but I suppose they are not to remain separated, and she will go to her sister in heaven.’

But the sick girl remained where she was. She lay quiet and patient all day long while her mother went to earn money out of doors. It was spring, and early in the morning, just as the mother was about to go out to work, the sun shone mildly and pleasantly through the little window, and threw its rays across the floor; and the sick girl fixed her eyes on the lowest pane in the window.

‘What may that green thing be that looks in at the window? It is moving in the wind.’

And the mother stepped to the window, and half opened it. ‘Oh!’ said she, ‘on my word, it is a little pea which has taken root here, and is putting out its little leaves. How can it have got here into the crack? There you have a little garden to look at.’

And the sick girl’s bed was moved nearer to the window, so that she could always see the growing pea; and the mother went forth to her work,

‘Mother, I think I shall get well,’ said the sick child in the evening. ‘The sun shone in upon me to-day delightfully warm. The little pea is thriving famously, and I shall thrive too, and get up, and go out into the warm sunshine.’

‘God grant it!’ said the mother, but she did not believe it would be so; but she took care to prop with a little stick the green plant which had given her daughter the pleasant thoughts of life, so that it might not be broken by the wind; she tied a piece of string to the window-sill and to the upper part of the frame, so that the pea might have something round which it could twine, when it shot up: and it did shoot up indeed—one could see how it grew every day.

‘Really, here is a flower coming!’ said the woman one day; and now she began to cherish the hope that her sick daughter would recover. She remembered that lately the child had spoken much more cheerfully than before, that in the last few days she had risen up in bed of her own accord, and had sat upright, looking with delighted eyes at the little garden in which only one plant grew. A week afterwards the invalid for the first time sat up for a whole hour. Quite happy, she sat there in the warm sunshine; the window was opened, and in front of it outside stood a pink pea blossom, fully blown. The sick girl bent down and gently kissed the delicate leaves. This day was like a festival.

‘The Heavenly Father Himself has planted that pea, and caused it to thrive, to be a joy to you, and to me also, my blessed child!’ said the glad mother; and she smiled at the flower, as if it had been a good angel.

But about the other peas? Why, the one who flew out into the wide world and said, ‘Catch me if you can,’ fell into the gutter on the roof, and found a home in a pigeon’s crop, and lay there like Jonah in the whale; the two lazy ones got just as far, for they, too, were eaten up by pigeons, and thus, at any rate, they were of some real use; but the fourth, who wanted to go up into the sun, fell into the gutter, and lay there in the dirty water for days and weeks, and swelled prodigiously.

‘How beautifully fat I’m growing!’ said the Pea. ‘I shall burst at last; and I don’t think any pea can do more than that. I’m the most remarkable of all the five that were in the pod.’

And the Gutter said he was right.

But the young girl at the garret window stood there with gleaming eyes, with the hue of health on her cheeks, and folded her thin hands over the pea blossom, and thanked Heaven for it.

‘I,’ said the Gutter, ‘stand up for my own pea.’

THE MONEY-PIG

IN the nursery a number of toys lay strewn about : high up, on the wardrobe, stood the Money-box, it was of clay in the shape of a little pig ; of course the pig had a slit in its back, and this slit had been so enlarged with a knife that whole dollar-pieces could slip through ; and, indeed, two such had slipped into the box, besides a number of pence. The Money-pig was stuffed so full that it could no longer rattle, and that is the highest point a Money-pig can attain. There it stood upon the cupboard, high and lofty, looking down upon everything else in the room. It knew very well that what it had in its stomach would have bought all the toys, and that’s what we call having self-respect.

The others thought of that too, even if they did not exactly express it, for there were many other things to speak of. One of the drawers was half pulled out, and there lay a great handsome Doll, though she was somewhat old, and her neck had been mended. She looked out and said,—

‘Shall we now play at men and women, for that is always something ?’

And now there was a general uproar, and even the framed prints on the walls turned round and showed that there was a wrong side to them ; but they did not do it to protest against the proposal.

It was late at night ; the moon shone through the window-frames and gave free light. Now the game was about to begin, and all, even the children’s Go-Cart, which certainly belonged to the coarser playthings, were invited to take part in the sport.

‘Each one has his own peculiar value,’ said the Go-Cart : ‘we cannot all be noblemen. There must be some who do the work, as the saying is.’

The Money-pig was the only one who received a written invitation, for he was of high standing, and they were afraid he would not accept a verbal message. Indeed, he did not answer to say whether he would come, nor did he come : if he was to take a part, he must enjoy the sport from his own home ; they were to arrange accordingly, and so they did.

The little toy theatre was now put up in such a way that the Money-pig could look directly in. They wanted to begin with a comedy, and afterwards there was to be a tea party and a discussion for mental improvement, and with this latter part they began immediately. The Rocking-Horse spoke of training and race, the Go-Cart of railways and steam power, for all this belonged to their profession, and it was something they could talk about. The Clock talked politics—ticks—ticks—and knew what was the time of day, though it was whispered he did not go correctly ; the Bamboo Cane stood there, stiff and proud, for he was conceited about his brass ferrule and his silver top, for being thus bound above and below ; and on the sofa lay two worked Cushions, pretty and stupid. And now the play began.

All sat and looked on, and it was requested that the audience should applaud and crack and stamp according as they were gratified. But the Riding-Whip said he never cracked for old people, only for young ones who were not yet married.

‘I crack for everything,’ said the Cracker.

And these were the thoughts they had while the play went on. The piece was worthless, but it was well played ; all the characters turned their painted side to the audience, for they were so made that they should only be looked at from that side, and not from the other ; and all played wonderfully well, coming out quite beyond the lamps, because the wires were a little too long, but that only made them come out the more. The mended Doll was so affected that she burst at the mended place in her neck, and the Money-pig was so enchanted in his way that he formed

the resolution to do something for one of the players, and to remember him in his will as the one who should be buried with him in the family vault, when matters were so far advanced.

It was true enjoyment, so that they quite gave up the thoughts of tea, and only carried out the idea of mental recreation. That's what they called playing at men and women; and there was no malice in it, for they were only playing; and each one thought of himself and of what the Money-pig might think; and the Money-pig thought farthest of all, for he thought of making his will and of his burial. And when might this come to pass? Certainly far sooner than was expected. Crack! it fell down from the cupboard—fell on the ground, and was broken to pieces; and the pennies hopped and danced: the little ones turned round like tops, and the bigger ones rolled away, particularly the one great Silver Dollar who wanted to go out into the world. And he came out into the world, and they all succeeded in doing so. The pieces of the Money-pig were put into the dust-bin; but the next day a new Money-pig was standing on the cupboard: it had not yet a farthing in its stomach, and therefore could not rattle, and in this it was like the other. But that was a beginning—and with that we will make an end.

IB AND CHRISTINE

NOT far from the stream Gudenaå, in the forest of Silkeborg, a great ridge of land rises and stretches along like a wall. By this ridge, westward, stands a farm-house, surrounded by poor land; the sandy soil is seen through the spare rye and wheat that grow upon it. Some years have elapsed since the time of which we speak. The people who lived here cultivated the fields, and moreover kept three sheep, a pig, and two oxen; in fact, they supported themselves quite comfortably, for they had enough to live on if they took things as they came. Indeed, they could have managed to save enough to keep two horses;

but, like the other peasants of the neighbourhood, they said, 'The horse eats itself up'—that is to say, it eats as much as it earns. Jeppe-Jens cultivated his field in summer. In the winter he made wooden shoes, and then he had an assistant, a journeyman, who understood how to make the wooden shoes strong, and light, and graceful. They carved shoes and spoons, and that brought in money. It would have been wronging the Jeppe-Jenses to call them poor people.

Little Ib, a boy seven years old, the only child of the family, would sit by, looking at the workmen, cutting at a stick, and occasionally cutting his finger. But one day he had cut two pieces of wood, so that they looked like little wooden shoes; and these he wanted to give to little Christine. She was the boatman's daughter, and was graceful and delicate as a gentleman's child; had she been differently dressed, no one would have imagined that she came out of the hut on the neighbouring heath. There lived her father, who was a widower, and supported himself by carrying firewood in his great boat out of the forest down to the eel-weir of Silkeborg, and sometimes even to the distant town of Randers. He had no one who could take care of little Christine, who was a year younger than Ib, and therefore the child was almost always with him in his boat, or in the forest among the heath plants and barberry bushes. When he had to go as far as Randers, he would bring little Christine to stay at the Jeppe-Jenses'.

Ib and Christine agreed very well in every particular: they dug in the ground together for treasures, and they ran and crept, and one day they ventured together up the high ridge, and a long way into the forest; they found a few snipe's eggs there, and that was a great event for them.

Ib had never been on the heath, nor had he ever been on the river. But even this was to happen; for Christine's father once invited him to go with them, and on the evening before the excursion, Ib went home with him.

Next morning early, the two children were sitting high up on the pile of firewood in the boat, eating bread and raspberries. Christine's father and his assistant propelled

the boat with staves. They had the current with them, and swiftly they glided down the stream, through the lakes which sometimes seemed shut in by woods and reeds. But there was always room for them to pass, even if the old trees bent quite forward over the water, and the old oaks bent down their bare branches, as if they had turned up their sleeves, and wanted to show their knotty naked arms. Old alder trees, which the stream had washed away from the bank, clung with their roots to the bottom of the stream, and looked like little wooded islands. The water-lilies rocked themselves on the river. It was a splendid excursion ; and at last they came to the great eel-weir, where the water rushed through the flood-gates ; that was something for Ib and Christine to see !

In those days there was no manufactory there, nor was there any town : only the old farm-yard, and the stock there was not large ; and the rushing of the water through the weir and the cry of the wild ducks were the only signs of life in Silkeborg. After the firewood had been unloaded, the father of Christine bought a whole bundle of eels and a slaughtered sucking-pig, and all was put into a basket and placed in the stern of the boat. Then they went back again up the stream ; but the wind was favourable, and when the sails were hoisted it was as good as if two horses had been harnessed to the boat.

When they had arrived at a point in the stream where the assistant-boatman dwelt, a little way from the bank, the boat was moored, and the two men landed, after exhorting the children to sit still. But the children did not do that very long. They must be peeping into the basket in which the eels and the sucking-pig had been placed, and they must needs pull the sucking-pig out, and take it in their hands ; and as both wanted to hold it at the same time, it came to pass that they let it fall into the water, and the sucking-pig drifted away with the stream—and here was a terrible event !

Ib jumped ashore, and ran a little distance along the bank, and Christine sprang after him.

‘ Take me with you ! ’ she cried.

And in a few minutes they were deep in the thicket, and could no longer see either the boat or the bank. They

ran on a little farther, and then Christine fell down on the ground and began to cry ; but Ib picked her up.

‘ Follow me ! ’ he cried. ‘ The house lies over there. ’

But the house was not there. They wandered on and on, over the withered leaves, and over dry fallen branches that crackled beneath their feet. Soon they heard a loud piercing scream. They stood still and listened, and presently the scream of an eagle again sounded through the wood. It was an ugly scream, and they were frightened at it ; but before them, in the thick wood, the most beautiful blueberries grew in wonderful profusion. They were so inviting that the children could not do otherwise than stop ; and they lingered for some time, eating the blueberries till they had quite blue mouths and blue cheeks. Now again they heard the cry they had heard before.

‘ We shall get into trouble about the pig, ’ said Christine.

‘ Come, let us go to our house, ’ said Ib ; ‘ it is here in the wood. ’

And they went forward. They presently came to a road, but it did not lead them home ; and darkness came on, and they were afraid. The wonderful stillness that reigned around was interrupted now and then by the shrill cries of the great horned owl and of the birds that were strange to them. At last they both lost themselves in a thicket. Christine cried, and Ib cried too ; and after they had cried for a time, they threw themselves down on the dry leaves, and went fast asleep.

The sun was high in the heavens when the two children awoke. They were cold ; but on the hillock close at hand the sun shone through the trees, and there they thought they would warm themselves ; and from there Ib fancied they would be able to see his parents’ house. But they were far away from that, in quite another part of the forest. They clambered to the top of the rising ground, and found themselves on the summit of a slope running down to the margin of a transparent lake. They could see fish in great numbers in the pure water illumined by the sun’s rays. This spectacle was quite a sudden surprise for them ; close beside them grew a nut tree covered with the finest nuts ; and now they picked the nuts and cracked them,



and ate the delicate young kernels, which had only just begun to form. But there was another surprise and another fright in store for them. Out of the thicket stepped a tall old woman : her face was quite brown, and her hair was deep black and shining. The whites of her eyes gleamed like a negro's ; on her back she carried a bundle, and in her hand she bore a knotted stick. She was a gipsy. The children did not at once understand what she said. She brought three nuts out of her pocket, and told them that in these nuts the most beautiful, the loveliest things were hidden, for they were wishing-nuts.

Ib looked at her, and she seemed so friendly that he plucked up courage and asked her if she would give him the nuts ; and the woman gave them to him, and gathered some more for herself, a whole pocketful, from the nut tree.

And Ib and Christine looked at the wishing-nuts with great eyes.

'Is there a carriage with a pair of horses in this nut ?' he asked.

'Yes, there's a golden carriage with golden horses,' answered the woman.

'Then give me the nut,' said little Christine.

And Ib gave it to her, and the strange woman tied it in her pocket-handkerchief for her.

'Is there in this nut a pretty little neckerchief, like the one Christine wears round her neck ?' inquired Ib.

'There are ten neckerchiefs in it,' answered the woman.

'There are beautiful dresses in it, and stockings, and a hat.'

'Then I will have that one too,' cried little Christine.

And Ib gave her the second nut also. The third was a little black thing.

'That one you can keep,' said Christine ; 'and it is a pretty one too.'

'What is in it ?' inquired Ib.

'The best of all things for you,' replied the gipsy woman.

And Ib held the nut very tight. The woman promised to lead the children into the right path, so that they might find their way home ; and now they went forward, certainly in quite a different direction from the path they should have followed. But that is no reason why we should suspect the gipsy woman of wanting to steal the

children. In the wild wood-path they met the forest bailiff, who knew Ib ; and by his help, Ib and Christine both arrived at home, where their friends had been very anxious about them. They were pardoned and forgiven, although they had indeed both deserved to get into trouble ; firstly, because they had let the sucking-pig fall into the water, and secondly, because they had run away.

Christine was taken back to her father on the heath, and Ib remained in the farm-house by the wood. The first thing he did in the evening was to bring forth out of his pocket the nut, in which ' the best thing of all ' was said to be enclosed. He placed it carefully between the door and the door-frame, and then shut the door so as to break the nut ; but there was not much kernel in it. The nut looked as if it were filled with snuff or black rich earth ; it was what we call hollow, or worm-eaten.

' Yes, that 's exactly what I thought,' said Ib. ' How could the very best thing be contained in this little nut ? And Christine will get just as little out of her two nuts, and will have neither fine clothes nor golden carriage.'

And winter came on, and the new year began ; indeed, several years went by.

Ib was now to be confirmed, and the clergyman lived a long way off. About this time the boatman one day visited Ib's parents, and told them that Christine was now going into service, and that she had been really fortunate in getting a remarkably good place, and falling into worthy hands.

' Only think ! ' he said ; ' she is going to the rich inn-keeper's, in the inn at Herning, far towards the west. She is to assist the hostess in keeping the house ; and afterwards, if she takes to it well, and stays to be confirmed there, the people are going to keep her with them.'

And Ib and Christine took leave of one another. People called them sweethearts ; and at parting, the girl showed Ib that she had still the two nuts which he had given her long ago, during their wanderings in the forest ; and she told him, moreover, that in a drawer she had carefully kept the little wooden shoes which he had carved as a present for her in their childish days. And thereupon they parted.

Ib was confirmed. But he remained in his mother's house, for he had become a clever maker of wooden shoes, and in summer he looked after the field. His mother had no one else to do this, for his father was dead.

Only seldom he got news of Christine from some passing postilion or eel-fisher. But she was well off at the rich innkeeper's ; and after she had been confirmed, she wrote a letter to her father, and sent a kind message to Ib and his mother ; and in the letter there was mention made of six new shifts and a fine new gown, which Christine had received from her master and mistress. This was certainly good news.

Next spring, there was a knock one day at the door of our Ib's old mother, and behold, the boatman and Christine stepped into the room. She had come on a visit to spend a day : a carriage had to come from the Herning Inn to the next village, and she had taken the opportunity to see her friends once again. She looked as handsome as a real lady, and she had a pretty gown on, which had been well sewn, and made expressly for her. There she stood, in grand array, and Ib was in his working clothes. He could not utter a word : he certainly seized her hand, and held it fast in his own, and was heartily glad ; but he could not get his tongue to obey him. Christine was not embarrassed, however, for she went on talking and talking, and, moreover, kissed Ib on his mouth in the heartiest manner.

'Do you really not know me ?' she asked ; but even afterwards, when they were left quite by themselves, and he stood there still holding her hand in his, he could only say,

'You look quite like a real lady, and I am so uncouth. How often I have thought of you, Christine, and of the old times !'

And arm in arm they sauntered up the great ridge, and looked across the stream towards the heath, towards the great heather banks. It was perfectly silent ; but by the time they parted it had grown quite clear to him that Christine must be his wife. Had they not, even in their childhood, been called sweethearts ? To him they seemed to be really engaged to each other, though neither of them had spoken a word on the subject. Only for a few more

hours could they remain together, for Christine was obliged to go back into the next village, from whence the carriage was to start early next morning for Herning. Her father and Ib escorted her as far as the village. It was a fair moonlight evening, and when they reached their destination, and Ib still held Christine's hand in his own, he could not let it go. His eyes brightened, but still the words came halting over his lips. Yet they came from the depths of his heart, when he said,

'If you have not become too grand, Christine, and if you can make up your mind to live with me in my mother's house as my wife, we must become a wedded pair some day; but we can wait a while yet.'

'Yes, let us wait for a time, Ib,' she replied; and she pressed his hand, and he kissed her lips. 'I trust in you, Ib,' said Christine; 'and I think that I love you—but I will sleep upon it.'

And with that they parted. And on the way home Ib told the boatman that he and Christine were as good as betrothed; and the boatman declared he had always expected it would turn out so; and he went home with Ib, and remained that night in the young man's house; but nothing further was said of the betrothal.

A year passed by, in the course of which two letters were exchanged between Ib and Christine. The signature was prefaced by the words, 'Faithful till death!' One day the boatman came in to Ib, and brought him a greeting from Christine. What he had further to say was brought out in somewhat hesitating fashion, but it was to the effect that Christine was almost more than prosperous, for she was a pretty girl, courted and loved. The son of the host had been home on a visit; he was employed in the office of some great institution in Copenhagen; and he was very much pleased with Christine, and she had taken a fancy to him: his parents were not unwilling, but it lay very much on Christine's mind that Ib had such a fancy for her; 'and so she had thought of refusing this great piece of good fortune,' said the boatman.

At first Ib said not a word, but he became as white as the wall, and slightly shook his head. Then he said slowly, 'Christine must not thrust her good fortune away.'

‘Then do you write a few words to her,’ said the boatman.

And Ib sat down to write ; but he could not manage it well : the words would not come as he wished them ; and first he altered, and then he tore up the page ; but the next morning a letter lay ready to be sent to Christine, and here it is :

I have read the letter you have sent to your father, and gather from it that you are prospering in all things, and that there is a prospect of higher fortune for you. Ask your heart, Christine, and think well over what you are going into, if you take me for your husband ; what I possess is but little. Do not think of me, or my position, but think of your own welfare. You are bound to me by no promise, and if in your heart you have given me one, I release you from it. May all the joy of the world be yours, Christine. Heaven will have comfort for my heart.

Ever your sincere friend, IB.

And the letter was dispatched, and Christine duly received it.

In the course of that November her banns were published in the church on the heath, and in Copenhagen, where her bridegroom lived ; and to Copenhagen she travelled, with her mistress, because the bridegroom could not undertake the journey into Jutland on account of his various occupations. On the journey, Christine met her father in a certain village, and here the two took leave of one another. A few words were mentioned concerning this fact, but Ib made no remark upon it : his mother said he had grown very silent of late ; indeed, he had become very pensive, and thus the three nuts came into his mind which the gipsy woman had given him long ago, and of which he had given two to Christine. Yes, it seemed right—in one of hers lay a golden carriage with horses, and in the other very elegant clothes ; all those luxuries would now be Christine’s in the capital. Her part had thus come true. And to him, Ib, the nut had offered only black earth. The gipsy woman had said this was ‘the best of all for him’. Yes, it was right—that also was coming true. The black earth was the best for him. Now he understood clearly what had been the woman’s meaning. In the black earth, in the dark grave, would be the best happiness for him.

And once again years passed by, not very many, but

they seemed long years to Ib. The old innkeeper and his wife died, and the whole of their property, many thousands of dollars, came to the son. Yes, now Christine could have the golden carriage and plenty of fine clothes.

During the two long years that followed, no letter came from Christine ; and when her father at length received one from her, it was not written in prosperity, by any means. Poor Christine ! neither she nor her husband had understood how to keep the money together, and there seemed to be no blessing with it, because they had not sought it.

And again the heather bloomed and faded. The snow had swept for many winters across the heath, and over the ridge beneath which Ib dwelt, sheltered from the rough winds. The spring sun shone bright, and Ib guided the plough across his field, when one day it glided over what appeared to be a flint stone. Something like a great black shaving came out of the ground, and when Ib took it up it proved to be a piece of metal ; and where the plough had cut into it, it gleamed brightly. It was a great heavy armlet of gold from heathen times. A grave-mound had been levelled here and its precious treasure found. Ib showed what he had found to the clergyman, who explained its value to him, and then he betook himself to the local judge, who reported the discovery to Copenhagen, and recommended Ib to deliver up the treasure in person.

‘ You have found in the earth the best thing you could find,’ said the judge.

‘ The best thing ! ’ thought Ib. ‘ The very best thing for me, and found in the earth ! Well, if that is the best, the gipsy woman was correct in what she prophesied to me.’

So Ib travelled with the boat from Aarhus to Copenhagen. To him, who had only crossed Gudena, it was like a voyage across the ocean. And he arrived in Copenhagen.

The value of the gold he had found was paid over to him ; it was a large sum—six hundred dollars. And Ib of the heath wandered about in the great capital.

On the day on which he had settled to go back with the captain, Ib lost his way in the streets, and took quite a different direction from the one he intended to follow.

He had wandered into the suburb of Christianshaven, into a poor little street. Not a human being was to be seen. At last a very little girl came out of a wretched house. Ib inquired of the little one the way to the street which he wanted ; but she looked shyly at him, and began to cry bitterly. He asked her what ailed her, but could not understand what she said in reply. But as they were both under a lamp, and the light fell on the girl's face, he felt quite strange, for Christine stood bodily before him, just as he remembered her from the days of his childhood.

And he went with the little maiden into the wretched house, and ascended the narrow, crazy staircase, which led to a little attic chamber in the roof. The air in this chamber was heavy and almost suffocating : no light was burning ; but there was heavy sighing and moaning in one corner. Ib struck a light with the help of a match. It was the mother of the child who lay on the miserable bed.

'Can I be of any service to you ?' asked Ib. 'This little girl has brought me up here, but I am a stranger in this city. Are there no neighbours or friends whom I could call to you ?' And he raised the sick woman's head.

It was Christine of the heath !

For years her name had not been mentioned at home in Jutland, for it would have disturbed Ib's peace of mind, and rumour had told nothing good concerning her. The wealth which her husband had inherited from his parents had made him proud and arrogant. He had given up his certain appointment, had travelled for half a year in foreign lands, and on his return had incurred debts, and yet lived in an expensive fashion. His carriage had bent over more and more, so to speak, until at last it turned over completely. The many merry companions and table-friends he had entertained declared it served him right, for he had kept house like a madman ; and one morning his body was found in the canal.

The hand of death was already on Christine. Her youngest child, only a few weeks old, expected in prosperity and born in misery, was already in its grave, and it had come to this with Christine herself, that she lay sick to death and forsaken, in a miserable room, amid a poverty

that she might well have borne in her childish days, but which now oppressed her painfully, since she had been accustomed to better things. It was her eldest child, also a little Christine, that here suffered hunger and poverty with her, and who had conducted Ib there.

‘I am afraid I shall die and leave the poor child here alone,’ she said. ‘Where in the world will she go then?’ And not a word more could she utter.

And Ib brought out another match, and lighted up a piece of candle he found in the room, and the flame illumined the wretched dwelling. And Ib looked at the little girl, and thought how Christine had looked when she was young; and he felt that for her sake he would be good to this child, which was as yet a stranger to him. The dying woman gazed at him, and her eyes opened wider and wider—did she recognize him? He never knew, for no further word passed over her lips.

And it was in the forest by the river Gudena, in the region of the heath. The air was grey, and there were no blossoms on the heath plant; but the autumn tempests whirled the yellow leaves from the wood into the stream, and out over the heath towards the hut of the boatman, in which strangers now dwelt; but beneath the ridge, safe beneath the protection of the high trees, stood the little farm, trimly whitewashed and painted, and within it the turf blazed up cheerily in the chimney; for within was sunlight, the beaming sunlight of a child’s two eyes; and the tones of the spring birds sounded in the words that came from the child’s rosy lips: she sat on Ib’s knee, and Ib was to her both father and mother, for her own parents were dead, and had vanished from her as a dream vanishes alike from children and grown men. Ib sat in the pretty neat house, for he was a prosperous man, while the mother of the little girl rested in the churchyard at Copenhagen, where she had died in poverty.

Ib had money, and was said to have provided for the future. He had won gold out of the black earth, and he had a Christine for his own, after all.

JACK THE DULLARD

OUT in the country lay an old mansion, and in it lived an old proprietor, who had two sons, which two young men thought themselves too clever by half. They wanted to go out and woo the King's daughter ; for the maiden in question had publicly announced that she would choose for her husband that one that she thought could best speak for himself.

So these two prepared themselves a full week for the wooing—this was the longest time that could be granted them ; but it was enough, for they had previous accomplishments, and these are useful. One of them knew the whole Latin dictionary by heart, and three whole years of the daily paper of the little town, and that either backwards or forwards. The other was deeply read in the corporation laws, and knew by heart what every alderman ought to know ; and accordingly he thought he could talk of affairs of state. And he knew one thing more : he could embroider braces, for he was a tasty, light-fingered fellow.

‘I shall win the Princess !’ So cried both of them. Therefore their father gave to each a handsome horse. The youth who knew the dictionary and newspaper by heart had a black horse, and he who knew all about the corporation laws received a milk-white steed. Then they rubbed the corners of their mouths with fish-oil, so that they might become very smooth and glib. All the servants stood below in the courtyard, and looked on while they mounted their horses ; and just by chance the third son came up. For there were three of them, though nobody counted the third with his brothers, because he was not so learned as they, and indeed he was generally known as ‘Jack the Dullard’.

‘Hallo !’ said he, ‘where are you going since you have put on your best clothes ?’

‘We’re going to the King’s court, as suitors to the King’s daughter. Don’t you know the announcement that has been made all through the country ?’ And they told him all about it.

‘My word ! I’ll be in it too !’ cried Jack the Dullard ;

and his two brothers burst out laughing at him, and rode away.

‘Father,’ said Jack, ‘I must have a horse too. I do feel so desperately inclined to marry! If she accepts me, she accepts me; and if she won’t have me, I’ll have her all the same!’

‘Don’t talk nonsense,’ said the father. ‘You shall have no horse from me. You don’t know how to speak. Your brothers are very different fellows from you.’

‘Well,’ quoth Jack the Dullard, ‘if I can’t have a horse, I’ll take the billy-goat, who belongs to me, and he can carry me very well!’

And so he mounted the billy-goat, pressed his heels into its sides, and galloped off along the highway.

‘Hei, houp! that was a ride! Here I come!’ shouted Jack the Dullard, and he sang till his voice echoed far and wide.

But his brothers rode slowly on in advance of him. They spoke not a word, for they were thinking all about the fine ideas they would have to bring out, and these had to be cleverly prepared beforehand.

‘Hallo!’ shouted Jack the Dullard. ‘Here am I! Look what I have found on the high road.’ And he showed them a dead crow which he had found.

‘Dullard!’ exclaimed the brothers, ‘what are you going to do with that?’

‘I am going to give it to the Princess.’

‘Yes, do so,’ said they; and they laughed, and rode on.

‘Hallo, here I am again! Just see what I have found now: you don’t find that on the high road every day!’

And the brothers turned round to see what he could have found now.

‘Dullard!’ they cried, ‘that is only an old wooden shoe, and the upper part is missing into the bargain; are you going to give that also to the Princess?’

‘Most certainly I shall,’ replied Jack the Dullard; and again the brothers laughed and rode on, and thus they got far in advance of him; but——

‘Hallo!’ and there was Jack the Dullard again. ‘It is getting better and better,’ he cried. ‘Hurrah! it is quite famous.’

‘Why, what have you found this time?’ inquired the brothers.

‘Oh,’ said Jack the Dullard, ‘I can hardly tell you. How glad the Princess will be!’

‘Bah!’ said the brothers; ‘that is nothing but clay out of the ditch.’

‘Yes, certainly it is,’ said Jack the Dullard; ‘and clay of the finest sort. See, it is so wet, it runs through one’s fingers.’ And he filled his pocket with the clay.

But his brothers galloped on as hard as the harness could stand, and consequently they arrived a full hour earlier at the town gate than could Jack. Now at the gate each suitor was provided with a number, and all were placed in rows, six in each row, and so closely packed together that they could not move their arms; and that was a prudent arrangement, for they would certainly have come to blows, had they been able, merely because one of them stood before the other.

All the inhabitants of the country round about stood in great crowds around the castle, almost under the very windows, to see the Princess receive the suitors; and as each stepped into the hall, his power of speech seemed to desert him. Then the Princess would say, ‘He is of no use! away with him!’

At last the turn came for that brother who knew the dictionary by heart; but he had absolutely forgotten it; and the boards seemed to re-echo with his footsteps, and the ceiling of the hall was made of looking-glass, so that he saw himself standing on his head; and at the window stood three clerks and a head clerk, and every one of them was writing down every single word that was uttered, so that it might be printed in the newspapers, and sold for a penny at the street corners. It was a terrible ordeal, and they had moreover made such a fire in the stove, that the stove-pipe was quite red hot.

‘It is dreadfully hot here!’ observed the first brother.

‘Yes,’ replied the Princess, ‘my father is going to roast young pullets to-day.’

Baa! there he stood. He had not been prepared for a speech of this kind, and had not a word to say, though he intended to say something witty. Baa!

‘He is of no use!’ said the Princess. ‘Away with him!’ And he was obliged to go accordingly. And now the second brother came in.

‘It is terribly warm here!’ he observed.

‘Yes, we’re roasting pullets to-day,’ replied the Princess.

‘What—what were you—were you pleased to ob—’ stammered he—and all the clerks wrote down, ‘pleased to ob—’

‘He is of no use!’ said the Princess. ‘Away with him!’

Now came the turn of Jack the Dullard. He rode into the hall on his goat.

‘Well, it’s most desperately hot here.’

‘Yes, because I’m roasting young pullets,’ replied the Princess.

‘Ah, that’s lucky!’ exclaimed Jack the Dullard, ‘then I suppose I can get a crow roasted?’

‘With the greatest pleasure,’ said the Princess. ‘But have you anything you can roast it in? for I have neither pot nor pan.’

‘Certainly I have!’ said Jack. ‘Here’s a cooking utensil with a tin handle.’

And he brought out the old wooden shoe, and put the crow into it.

‘Well, that is a famous dish!’ said the Princess. ‘But what shall we do for sauce?’

‘Oh, I have that in my pocket,’ said Jack: ‘I have so much of it that I can afford to throw some away;’ and he poured some of the clay out of his pocket.

‘I like that!’ said the Princess. ‘You can give an answer, and you have something to say for yourself, and so you shall be my husband. But are you aware that every word we speak is being taken down, and will be published in the paper to-morrow? You will see in every window three clerks and a head clerk; and the old head clerk is the worst of all, for he can’t understand anything.’

But she only said this to frighten him; and the clerks gave a great shout of delight, and each one spurted a blot out of his pen on to the floor.

‘Oh, those are the gentlemen, are they?’ said Jack; ‘then I will give the best I have to the head clerk.’ And

he turned out his pockets, and flung the wet clay full in the head clerk's face.

'That was very cleverly done,' observed the Princess. 'I could not have done that ; but I shall learn in time.'

And accordingly Jack the Dullard was made a king, and received a crown and a wife, and sat upon a throne. And this report we have straight from the newspaper of the head clerk—but it is not to be depended upon !

THE BOTTLE-NECK

IN a narrow crooked street, among other abodes of poverty, stood an especially narrow and tall house built of timber, which had given way in every direction. The house was inhabited by poor people, and the deepest poverty was in the garret-lodging in the gable, where, in front of the only window, hung an old bent birdcage, which had not even a proper water-glass, but only a Bottle-neck reversed, with a cork stuck in the mouth, and filled with water. An old maid stood by the window : she had hung the cage with green chickweed ; and a little chaffinch hopped from perch to perch, and sang and twittered merrily enough.

'Yes, it's all very well for you to sing,' said the Bottle-neck ; that is to say, it did not pronounce the words as we can speak them, for a bottle-neck can't speak ; but that's what he thought to himself in his own mind, as when we people talk quietly to ourselves. 'Yes, it's all very well for you to sing, you that have all your limbs uninjured. You ought to feel what it's like to lose one's body, and to have only mouth and neck left, and that with a cork into the bargain, as in my case ; and then I'm sure you would not sing. But after all it is well that there should be somebody at least who is merry. I've no reason to sing, and, moreover, I can't sing. Yes, when I was a whole bottle, I sang out well if they rubbed me with a cork. They used to call me a perfect lark, a magnificent lark ! Ah, when I was out at a picnic with the tanner's family, and his daughter was betrothed ! Yes, I remember it as

if it had happened only yesterday. I have gone through a great deal, when I come to recollect. I've been in the fire and the water, have been deep in the black earth, and have mounted higher than most of the others ; and now I'm hanging here, outside the birdcage, in the air and the sunshine ! Oh, it would be quite worth while to hear my history ; but I don't speak aloud of it, because I can't.'

And now the Bottle-neck told its story, which was sufficiently remarkable. It told the story to itself, or only thought it in its own mind ; and the little bird sang his song merrily, and down in the street there was driving and hurrying, and every one thought of his own affairs, or perhaps of nothing at all ; but the Bottle-neck did think. It thought of the flaming furnace in the manufactory, where it had been blown into life ; it still remembered that it had been quite warm, that it had glanced into the hissing furnace, the home of its origin, and had felt a great desire to leap directly back again ; but that gradually it had become cooler, and had been very comfortable in the place to which it was taken. It had stood in a rank with a whole regiment of brothers and sisters, all out of the same furnace ; some of them had certainly been blown into champagne bottles, and others into beer bottles, and that makes a difference. Later, out in the world, it may well happen that a beer bottle may contain the most precious wine, and a champagne bottle be filled with blacking ; but even in decay there is always something left by which people can see what one has been—nobility is nobility, even when filled with blacking.

All the bottles were packed up, and our bottle was among them. At that time it did not think to finish its career as a bottle-neck, or that it should work its way up to be a bird's glass, which is always an honourable thing, for one is of some consequence, after all. The bottle did not again behold the light of day till it was unpacked with the other bottles in the cellar of the wine merchant, and rinsed out for the first time ; and that was a strange sensation. There it lay, empty and without a cork, and felt strangely unwell, as if it wanted something, it could not tell what. At last it was filled with good costly wine, and was provided with a cork, and sealed down. A ticket

was placed on it marked 'first quality'; and it felt as if it had carried off the first prize at an examination; for, you see, the wine was good and the bottle was good. When one is young, that's the time for poetry! There was a singing and sounding within it, of things which it could not understand—of green sunny mountains, whereon the grape grows, where many vine dressers, men and women, sing and dance and rejoice. 'Ah, how beautiful is life!' There was a singing and sounding of all this in the bottle, as in a young poet's brain; and many a young poet does not understand the meaning of the song that is within him.

One morning the bottle was bought, for the tanner's apprentice was dispatched for a bottle of wine—'of the best.' And now it was put in the provision basket, with ham and cheese and sausages; the finest butter and the best bread were put into the basket too—the tanner's daughter herself packed it. She was young and very pretty; her brown eyes laughed, and round her mouth played a smile which said just as much as her eyes. She had delicate hands, beautifully white, and her neck was whiter still; you saw at once that she was one of the most beautiful girls in the town: and still she was not engaged.

The provision basket was in the lap of the young girl when the family drove out into the forest. The bottle-neck looked out from the folds of the white napkin. There was red wax upon the cork, and the bottle looked straight into the girl's face. It also looked at the young sailor who sat next to the girl. He was a friend of old days, the son of the portrait painter. Quite lately he had passed with honour through his examination as mate, and to-morrow he was to sail away in a ship, far off to a distant land. There had been much talk of this while the basket was being packed; and certainly the eyes and mouth of the tanner's pretty daughter did not wear a very joyous expression just then.

The young people sauntered through the greenwood, and talked to one another. What were they talking of? No, the bottle could not hear that, for it was in the provision basket. A long time passed before it was drawn forth; but when that happened, there had been pleasant things

going on, for all were laughing, and the tanner's daughter laughed too ; but she spoke less than before, and her cheeks glowed like two roses.

The father took the full bottle and the corkscrew in his hand. Yes, it's a strange thing to be drawn thus, the first time ! The Bottle-neck could never afterwards forget that impressive moment ; and indeed there was quite a convulsion within him when the cork flew out, and a great throbbing as the wine poured forth into the glasses.

'Health to the betrothed pair !' cried the papa. And every glass was emptied to the bottom, and the young mate kissed his beautiful bride.

'Happiness and blessing !' said the two old people. And the young man filled the glasses again.

'Safe return, and a wedding this day next year !' he cried ; and when the glasses were emptied, he took the bottle, raised it on high, and said, 'Thou hast been present at the happiest day of my life, thou shalt never serve another !'

And so saying, he hurled it high into the air. The tanner's daughter did not then think that she should see the bottle fly again ; and yet it was to be so. It then fell into the thick reeds on the margin of a little woodland lake ; and the Bottle-neck could remember quite plainly how it lay there for some time.

'I gave them wine, and they give me marsh water,' he said ; 'but it is well meant.'

He could no longer see the betrothed couple and the cheerful old people ; but for a long time he could hear them rejoicing and singing. Then at last came two peasant boys, and looked into the reeds ; they spied out the bottle, and took it up ; and now it was provided for.

At their home, in the wooden cottage, the eldest of three brothers, who was a sailor, and about to start on a long voyage, had been the day before to take leave. The mother was just engaged in packing up various things he was to take with him upon his journey, and which the father was going to carry into the town that evening to see his son once more, to give him a farewell greeting from the lad's mother and himself, and a little bottle of medicated

brandy had already been wrapped up in a parcel, when the boys came in with the larger and stronger bottle which they had found. This bottle would hold more than the little one, and they pronounced that the brandy would be capital for a bad digestion, inasmuch as it was mixed with medical herbs. The draught that was poured into the bottle was not so good as the red wine with which it had once been filled ; these were bitter thoughts, but even these are sometimes good. The new big bottle was to go, and not the little one ; and so the bottle went travelling again. It was taken on board for Peter Jensen, in the very same ship in which the young mate sailed. But he did not see the bottle ; and, indeed, he would not have known it, or thought it was the same one out of which had been drunk a health to the betrothed pair and to his own happy return.

Certainly it had no longer wine to give, but still it contained something that was just as good. Accordingly, whenever Peter Jensen brought it out, it was dubbed by his messmates *The Apothecary*. It contained the best medicine, medicine that strengthened the weak, and it gave liberally so long as it had a drop left. That was a pleasant time, and the bottle sang when it was rubbed with the cork ; and it was called the *Great Lark*, '*Peter Jensen's Lark*.'

Long days and months rolled on, and the bottle already stood empty in a corner, when it happened—whether on the passage out or home the bottle could not tell, for it had never been ashore—that a storm arose ; great waves came careering along, darkly and heavily, and lifted and tossed the ship to and fro. The mainmast was shivered, and a wave started one of the planks, and the pumps became useless. It was black night. The ship sank ; but at the last moment the young mate wrote on a leaf of paper, '*God's will be done ! We are sinking !*' He wrote the name of his betrothed, and his own name, and that of the ship, and put the leaf in an empty bottle that happened to be at hand : he corked it firmly down, and threw it out into the foaming sea. He knew not that it was the very bottle from which the goblet of joy and hope had once been filled for him and for her ; and now it was tossing

on the waves with his last greeting and the message of death.

The ship sank, and the crew sank with her. The bottle sped on like a bird, for it bore a heart, a loving letter, within itself. And the sun rose and set; and the bottle felt as at the time when it first came into being in the red gleaming oven—it felt a strong desire to leap back into the light.

It experienced calms and fresh storms; but it was hurled against no rock, and was devoured by no shark; and thus it drifted on for a year and a day, sometimes towards the north, sometimes towards the south, just as the current carried it. Beyond this it was its own master, but one may grow tired even of that.

The written page, the last farewell of the sweetheart to his betrothed, would only bring sorrow if it came into her hands; but where were the hands, so white and delicate, which had once spread the cloth on the fresh grass in the greenwood, on the betrothal day? Where was the tanner's daughter? Yes, where was the land, and which land might be nearest to her dwelling? The bottle knew not; it drove onward and onward, and was at last tired of wandering, because that was not in its way; but yet it had to travel until at last it came to land—to a strange land. It understood not a word of what was spoken here, for this was not the language it had heard spoken before; and one loses a good deal if one does not understand the language.

The bottle was fished out and examined. The leaf of paper within it was discovered, and taken out, and turned over and over, but the people did not understand what was written thereon. They saw that the bottle must have been thrown overboard, and that something about this was written on the paper, but what were the words? That question remained unanswered, and the paper was put back into the bottle, and the latter was deposited in a great cupboard in a great room in a great house.

Whenever strangers came, the paper was brought out and turned over and over, so that the inscription, which was only written in pencil, became more and more illegible, so that at last no one could see that there were letters on

it. And for a whole year more the bottle remained standing in the cupboard; and then it was put into the loft, where it became covered with dust and cobwebs. Then it thought of the better days, the times when it had poured forth red wine in the greenwood, when it had been rocked on the waves of the sea, and when it had carried a secret, a letter, a parting sigh.

For full twenty years it stood up in the loft; and it might have remained there longer, but that the house was to be rebuilt. The roof was taken off, and then the bottle was noticed, and they spoke about it, but it did not understand their language; for one cannot learn a language by being shut up in a loft, even if one stays there twenty years.

‘If I had been down in the room,’ thought the Bottle, ‘I might have learned it.’

It was now washed and rinsed, and indeed this was requisite. It felt quite transparent and fresh, and as if its youth had been renewed in this its old age; but the paper it had carried so faithfully had been destroyed in the washing.

The bottle was filled with seeds, it did not know the kind. It was corked and well wrapped up. It saw neither lantern nor candle, to say nothing of sun or moon; and yet, it thought, when one goes on a journey one ought to see something; but though it saw nothing, it did what was most important—it travelled to the place of its destination, and was there unpacked.

‘What trouble they have taken over yonder with that bottle!’ it heard people say; ‘and yet it is most likely broken.’ But it was not broken.

The bottle understood every word that was now said; this was the language it had heard at the furnace, and at the wine merchant’s, and in the forest, and in the ship, the only good old language it understood: it had come back home, and the language was as a salutation of welcome to it. For very joy, it felt ready to jump out of people’s hands; hardly did it notice that its cork had been drawn, and that it had been emptied and carried into the cellar, to be placed there and forgotten. There’s no place like home, even if it’s in a cellar! It never

occurred to the bottle to think how long it lay there, for it felt comfortable, and accordingly lay there for years. At last people came down into the cellar to carry off all the bottles, and ours among the rest.

Out in the garden there was a great festival. Flaming lamps hung like garlands, and paper lanterns shone transparent, like great tulips. The evening was lovely, the weather still and clear, the stars twinkled; it was the time of the new moon, but in reality the whole moon could be seen as a bluish-grey disk with a golden rim round half its surface, which was a very beautiful sight for those who had good eyes.

The illumination extended even to the most retired of the garden walks; at least, so much of it that one could find one's way there. Among the leaves of the hedges stood bottles, with a light in each; and among them was also the bottle we know, and which was destined one day to finish its career as a bottle-neck, a bird's drinking-glass. Everything here appeared lovely to our bottle, for it was once more in the greenwood, amid joy and feasting, and heard song and music, and the noise and murmur of a crowd, especially in that part of the garden where the lamps blazed and the paper lanterns displayed their many colours. Thus it stood, in a distant walk certainly, but that made it the more important; for it bore its light, and was at once ornamental and useful, and that is as it should be: in such an hour one forgets twenty years spent in a loft, and it is right one should do so.

There passed close to it a pair, like the pair who had walked together long ago in the wood, the sailor and the tanner's daughter; the bottle seemed to experience all that over again. In the garden were walking not only the guests, but other people who were allowed to view all the splendour; and among these latter came an old maid without kindred, but not without friends. She was just thinking, like the bottle, of the greenwood, and of a young betrothed pair—of a pair which concerned her very nearly, a pair in which she had an interest, and of which she had been a part in that happiest hour of her life—the hour one never forgets, if one should become ever so old a maid. But she did not know the bottle, and it did not know her:

it is thus we pass each other in the world, meeting again and again, as these two met, now that they were together again in the same town.

From the garden the bottle was dispatched once more to the wine merchant's, where it was filled with wine and sold to the aeronaut, who was to make an ascent in his balloon on the following Sunday. A great crowd had assembled to witness the sight; military music had been provided, and many other preparations had been made. The bottle saw everything from a basket in which it lay next to a live rabbit, which latter was quite bewildered because he knew he was to be taken up into the air, and let down again in a parachute; but the bottle knew nothing of the 'up' or the 'down'; it only saw the balloon swelling up bigger and bigger, and at last, when it could swell no more, beginning to rise, and to grow more and more restless. The ropes that held it were cut, and the huge machine floated aloft with the aeronaut and the basket containing the bottle and the rabbit, and the music sounded, and all the people cried, 'Hurrah!'

'This is a wonderful passage, up into the air!' thought the Bottle; 'this is a new way of sailing: at any rate, up here we cannot strike upon anything.'

Thousands of people gazed up at the balloon, and the old maid looked up at it also; she stood at the open window of the garret, in which hung the cage, with the little chaffinch, who had no water-glass as yet, but was obliged to be content with an old cup. In the window stood a myrtle in a pot; and it had been put a little aside that it might not fall out, for the old maid was leaning out of the window to look, and she distinctly saw the aeronaut in the balloon, and how he let down the rabbit in the parachute, and then drank to the health of all the spectators, and at length hurled the bottle high in the air; she never thought that this was the identical bottle which she had already once seen thrown aloft in honour of her and of her friend on the day of rejoicing in the greenwood, in the time of her youth.

The bottle had no time for thought, for it was quite startled at thus suddenly reaching the highest point in its career. Steeples and roofs lay far, far beneath, and the people looked like mites.

But now it began to descend with a much more rapid fall than that of the rabbit ; the bottle threw somersaults in the air, and felt quite young, and quite free and unfettered ; and yet it was half full of wine, though it did not remain so for long. What a journey ! The sun shone on the bottle, all the people were looking at it ; the balloon was already far away, and soon the bottle was far away too, for it fell upon a roof and broke ; but the pieces had got such an impetus that they could not stop themselves, but went jumping and rolling on till they came down into the courtyard and lay there in smaller pieces yet ; only the Bottle-neck managed to keep whole, and that was cut off as if it had been done with a diamond.

‘ That would do capitally for a bird-glass,’ said the cellarman ; but he had neither a bird nor a cage ; and to expect him to provide both because they had found a bottle-neck that might be made available for a glass, would have been expecting too much ; but the old maid in the garret, perhaps it might be useful to her ; and now the Bottle-neck was taken up to her, and was provided with a cork. The part that had been uppermost was now turned downwards, as often happens when changes take place ; fresh water was poured into it, and it was fastened to the cage of the little bird, which sang and twittered right merrily.

‘ Yes, it’s very well for you to sing,’ said the Bottle-neck.

And it was considered remarkable for having been in the balloon—for that was all they knew of its history. Now it hung there as a bird-glass, and heard the murmuring and noise of the people in the street below, and also the words of the old maid in the room within. An old friend had just come to visit her, and they talked—not of the Bottle-neck, but about the myrtle in the window.

‘ No, you certainly must not spend two dollars for your daughter’s bridal wreath,’ said the old maid. ‘ You shall have a beautiful little nosegay from me, full of blossoms. Do you see how splendidly that tree has come on ? yes, that has been raised from a spray of the myrtle you gave me on the day after my betrothal, and from which I was to have made my own wreath when the year was past ; but that day never came ! The eyes closed that were to have been

my joy and delight through life. In the depths of the sea he sleeps sweetly, my dear one ! The myrtle has become an old tree, and I have become a yet older woman ; and when it faded at last, I took the last green shoot, and planted it in the ground, and it has become a great tree ; and now at length the myrtle will serve at the wedding—as a wreath for your daughter.’

There were tears in the eyes of the old maid. She spoke of the beloved of her youth, of their betrothal in the wood ; many thoughts came to her, but the thought never came that, quite close to her, before the very window, was a remembrance of those times—the neck of the bottle which had shouted for joy when the cork flew out with a bang on the betrothal day. But the Bottle-neck did not recognize her either, for he was not listening to what she said—partly because it only thought about itself.

THE STONE OF THE WISE MEN

OF course you know the story of Holger the Dane ; we are not going to tell you that, but will ask if you remember from it that ‘ Holger the Dane won the great land of India, east as far as the world’s end, even to the tree which is called the Tree of the Sun,’ as Christian Pedersen puts it. Do you know Christian Pedersen ? it doesn’t matter if you don’t. Holger the Dane gave Prester John power and authority over the land of India. Do you know Prester John ? it doesn’t matter either if you don’t know him, for he doesn’t come into this story at all. You are to hear about the Tree of the Sun ‘ in India, east as far as the world’s end ’, and it was then understood by men who had not learned geography as we have : but that also does not matter at the present time.

The Tree of the Sun was a noble tree, such as we have never seen and such as you will never see either. The crown stretched out several miles around ; it was really an entire wood ; each of its smallest branches formed, in its turn, a whole tree. Palms, beech trees, pines, plane

trees, and various other kinds grew here, which are found scattered in all other parts of the world : they shot out like small branches from the great boughs, and these large boughs with their windings and knots formed, as it were, valleys and hills, clothed with velvety green and covered with flowers. Every branch was like a wide, blooming meadow, or like the most charming garden. The sun shone down on it with delightful rays, for it was the tree of the sun, and the birds from all quarters of the world assembled together—birds from the primæval forests of America, the rose gardens of Damascus, from the deserts of Africa, in which the elephant and the lion boast of being the only rulers. The Polar birds came flying hither, and of course the stork and the swallow were not absent ; but the birds were not the only living beings : the stag, the squirrel, the antelope, and a hundred other beautiful and light-footed animals were at home. The crown of the tree was a wide-spread fragrant garden, and in the midst of it, where the great boughs raised themselves like green hillocks, there stood a castle of crystal, with a view of all the lands of the world. Each tower was reared in the form of a lily. Through the stem one could ascend, for within it was a winding stair ; one could step out upon the leaves as upon balconies ; and up in the calyx of the flower itself was the most beautiful, sparkling round hall, above which no other roof rose but the blue firmament with sun and stars.

Just as much splendour, though in another way, appeared below, in the wide halls of the castle. Here, on the walls, the whole world around was reflected. One saw everything that was done, so that there was no necessity for reading any papers, and indeed there were no papers there. Everything was to be seen in living pictures, if one only wished to see it ; for too much is still too much even for the wisest man ; and this man dwelt here. His name is very difficult—you will not be able to pronounce it, and therefore it may remain unmentioned. He knew everything that a man on earth can know or can get to know ; every invention which had already been or which was yet to be made was known to him ; but nothing more, for everything in the world has its limits. The wise King Solomon was only half as wise as he, and yet he was very wise, and governed

the powers of nature, and held sway over potent spirits : yea, Death itself was obliged to give him every morning a list of those who were to die during the day. But King Solomon himself was obliged to die too ; and this thought it was which often in the deepest manner employed the inquirer, the mighty lord in the castle on the Tree of the Sun. He also, however high he might tower above men in wisdom, must die one day. He knew that he and his children also must fade away like the leaves of the forest, and become dust. He saw the human race fade away like the leaves on the tree ; saw new men come to fill their places ; but the leaves that fell off never sprouted forth again—they fell to dust or were transformed into other parts of plants.

‘What happens to man,’ the wise man asked himself, ‘when the angel of death touches him ? What may death be ? The body is dissolved. And the soul ? Yes, what is the soul ? whither doth it go ? To eternal life, says the comforting voice of religion ; but what is the transition ? where does one live and how ? Above, in heaven, says the pious man, thither we go. Thither ? ’ repeated the wise man, and fixed his eyes upon the sun and the stars ; ‘up yonder ? ’

But he saw, from the earthly ball, that up and down were one and the same, according as one stood here or there on the rolling globe ; and even if he mounted as high as the loftiest mountains of earth rear their heads, to the air which we below call clear and transparent—the pure heaven—a black darkness spread abroad like a cloth, and the sun had a coppery glow and sent forth no rays, and our earth lay wrapped in an orange-coloured mist. How narrow were the limits of the bodily eye, and how little the eye of the soul could see !—how little did even the wisest know of that which is the most important to us all !

In the most secret chamber of the castle lay the greatest treasure of the earth : the Book of Truth. Leaf for leaf, the wise man read it through : every man may read in this book, but only by fragments. To many an eye the characters seem to tremble, so that the words cannot be put together ; on certain pages the writing often seems so pale, so faded, that only a blank leaf appears. The wiser a man becomes, the more he can read ; and the wisest

read most. For that purpose he knew how to unite the sunlight and the starlight with the light of reason and of hidden powers ; and through this stronger light many things came clearly before him from the page. But in the division of the book whose title is ' Life after Death ' not even one point was to be distinctly seen. That pained him. Should he not be able here upon earth to obtain a light by which everything should become clear to him that stood written in the Book of Truth ?

Like the wise King Solomon, he understood the language of the animals, and could interpret their talk and their songs. But that made him none the wiser. He found out the forces of plants and metals—the forces to be used for the cure of diseases, for delaying death—but none that could destroy death. In all created things that were within his reach he sought the light that should shine upon the certainty of an eternal life ; but he found it not. The Book of Truth lay before him with leaves that appeared blank. Christianity showed him in the Bible words of promise of an eternal life ; but he wanted to read it in *his* book, and in that he saw nothing.

He had five children—four sons, educated as well as the children of the wisest father could be, and a daughter, fair, mild, and clever, but blind ; yet this appeared no loss to her—her father and brothers were eyes to her, and the vividness of her feelings saw for her.

Never had the sons gone farther from the castle than the branches of the tree extended, still less the sister. They were happy children in the land of childhood—in the beautiful fragrant Tree of the Sun. Like all children, they were very glad when any story was related to them ; and the father told them many things that other children would not have understood ; but these were just as clever as most grown-up people are among us. He explained to them what they saw in living pictures on the castle walls—the doings of men and the march of events in all the lands of the earth ; and often the sons expressed the wish that they could be present at all the great deeds and take part in them ; and their father then told them that out in the world it was difficult and toilsome—that the world was not quite what it appeared to them from their beauteous

home. He spoke to them of the true, the beautiful, and the good, and told them that these three things held the world together, and that under the pressure they had to endure they became hardened into a precious stone, clearer than the water of the diamond—a jewel whose splendour had value with God, and whose brightness outshone everything, and which was called the ‘Stone of the Wise’. He told them that just as one through created things could attain to the knowledge of God, so through men themselves one could attain to the certainty that such a jewel as the ‘Stone of the Wise’ existed. He could not tell them any more about it, for he knew no more. This narration would have exceeded the perception of other children, but these children understood it, and at length other children, too, will learn to comprehend its meaning.

They questioned their father concerning the true, the beautiful, and the good; and he explained it to them, told them many things, and told them also that God, when He made man out of the dust of the earth, gave five kisses to His work—fiery kisses, heart kisses—which we now call the five senses. Through these the true, the beautiful, and the good is seen, perceived, and understood; through these it is valued, protected, and furthered. Five senses have been given bodily and mentally, inwardly and outwardly, to body and soul.

The children reflected deeply upon all these things; they meditated upon them by day and night. Then the eldest of the brothers dreamed a splendid dream. Strangely enough, the second brother had the same dream, and the third, and the fourth brother likewise; all of them dreamed exactly the same thing—namely, that each went out into the world and found the ‘Stone of the Wise’, which gleamed like a beaming light on his forehead when, in the morning dawn, he rode back on his swift horse over the velvety green meadows of his home into the castle of his father; and the jewel threw such a heavenly light and radiance upon the leaves of the book, that everything was illuminated that stood written concerning the life beyond the grave. But the sister dreamed nothing about going out into the wide world: it never entered her mind. Her world was her father’s house.

‘I shall ride forth into the wide world,’ said the eldest brother. ‘I must try what life is like there, and go to and fro among men. I will practise only the good and the true ; with these I will protect the beautiful. Much shall change for the better when I am there.’

Now his thoughts were bold and great, as our thoughts generally are at home in the corner of the hearth, before we have gone forth into the world and have encountered wind and rain, and thorns and thistles.

In him and in all his brothers the five senses were highly developed, inwardly and outwardly ; but each of them had *one* sense which in keenness and development surpassed the other four. In the case of the eldest this was Sight. This was to do him especial service. He said he had eyes for all time, eyes for all nations, eyes that could look into the depths of the earth, where the treasures lie hidden, and deep into the hearts of men, as though nothing but a pane of glass were placed before them : he could read more than we can see on the cheek that blushes or grows pale, in the eye that weeps or smiles. Stags and antelopes escorted him to the boundary of his home towards the west, and there the wild swans received him and flew north-west. He followed them. And now he had gone far out into the world—far from the land of his father, that extended eastward to the end of the earth.

But how he opened his eyes in astonishment ! Many things were here to be seen ; and many things appear very different, when a man beholds them with his own eyes, from when he merely sees them in a picture, as the son had done in his father’s house, however faithful the picture may be. At the outset he nearly lost his eyes in astonishment at all the rubbish and all the masquerading stuff put forward to represent the beautiful ; but he did not quite lose them, he had other use for them. He wished to go thoroughly and honestly to work in the understanding of the beautiful, the true, and the good. But how were these represented in the world ? He saw that often the garland that belonged to the beautiful was given to the hideous ; that the good was often passed by without notice, while mediocrity was applauded when it should have been hissed off. People looked to the dress, and not to the wearer ; asked for

a name, and not for desert ; and went more by reputation than by service. It was the same thing everywhere.

‘I see I must attack these things vigorously,’ he said, and attacked them with vigour accordingly.

But while he was looking for the truth, came the Evil One, the father of lies. Gladly would the fiend have plucked out the eyes of this Seer ; but that would have been too direct : the devil works in a more cunning way. He let him see and seek the true and the good ; but while the young man was contemplating them, the Evil Spirit blew one mote after another into each of his eyes ; and such a proceeding would be hurtful even to the best sight. Then the fiend blew upon the motes, so that they became beams ; and the eyes were destroyed, and the Seer stood like a blind man in the wide world, and had no faith in it : he lost his good opinion of it and himself ; and when a man gives up the world and himself, all is over with him.

‘Over !’ said the wild swans, who flew across the sea towards the east. ‘Over !’ twittered the swallows, who likewise flew eastward, towards the Tree of the Sun. That was no good news for those at home.

‘I fancy the *Seer* must have fared badly,’ said the second brother ; ‘but the *Hearer* may have better fortune.’ For this one possessed the sense of hearing in an eminent degree : he could hear the grass grow, so quick was he to hear.

He took a hearty leave of all at home, and rode away, provided with good abilities and good intentions. The swallows escorted him, and he followed the swans ; and he stood far from his home in the wide world.

But he experienced the fact that one may have too much of a good thing. His hearing was *too* fine. He not only heard the grass grow, but could hear every man’s heart beat, in sorrow and in joy. The whole world was to him like a great clockmaker’s workshop, wherein all the clocks were going ‘tick, tick !’ and all the turret clocks striking ‘ding dong’. It was unbearable. For a long time his ears held out, but at last all the noise and screaming became too much for one man. There came blackguard boys of sixty years old—for it is not age that does it ; they roared and shouted in a way that one could laugh at ; but then

came gossip, which whispered through all houses, lanes, and streets, right out to the high-way. Falsehood thrust itself forward and played the master; the bells on the fool's cap jangled and declared they were church bells; and the noise became too bad for the Hearer, and he thrust his fingers into both ears; but still he could hear false singing and bad sounds, gossip and idle words, scandal and slander, groaning and moaning without and within. Heaven help us! He thrust his fingers deeper and deeper into his ears, but at last the drums burst. Now he could hear nothing at all of the good, the true, and the beautiful, for his hearing was to have been the bridge by which he crossed. He became silent and suspicious, trusted no one at last, not even himself, and that is very unfortunate, and, no longer hoping to find and bring home the costly jewel, he gave it up, and gave himself up; and that was the worst of all. The birds who winged their flight towards the east brought tidings of this, till the news reached the castle in the Tree of the Sun.

'I will try now!' said the third brother. 'I have a sharp nose!'

Now that was not said in very good taste; but it was his way, and one must take him as he was. He had a happy temper, and was a poet, a real poet: he could sing many things that he could not say, and many things struck him far earlier than they occurred to others. 'I can smell fire!' he said; and he attributed to the sense of smelling, which he possessed in a very high degree, a great power in the region of the beautiful.

'Every fragrant spot in the realm of the beautiful has its frequenters,' he said. 'One man feels at home in the atmosphere of the tavern, among the flaring tallow candles, where the smell of spirits mingles with the fumes of bad tobacco. Another prefers sitting among the overpowering scent of jessamine, or scenting himself with strong clove oil. This man seeks out the fresh sea breeze, while that one climbs to the highest mountain-top and looks down upon the busy little life beneath.'

Thus he spake. It seemed to him as if he had already been out in the world, as if he had already associated with

men and known them. But this experience arose from within himself: it was the poet within him, the gift of Heaven, and bestowed on him in his cradle.

He bade farewell to his paternal roof in the Tree of the Sun, and departed on foot through the pleasant scenery of home. Arrived at its confines, he mounted on the back of an ostrich, which runs faster than a horse; and afterwards, when he fell in with the wild swans, he swung himself on the strongest of them, for he loved change; and away he flew over the sea to distant lands with great forests, deep lakes, mighty mountains, and proud cities; and wherever he came it seemed as if sunshine travelled with him across the fields, for every flower, every bush, every tree exhaled a new fragrance, in the consciousness that a friend and protector was in the neighbourhood, who understood them and knew their value. The crippled rose bush reared up its twigs, unfolded its leaves, and bore the most beautiful roses; every one could see it, and even the black damp Wood Snail noticed its beauty.

‘I will give my seal to the flower,’ said the Snail; ‘I have spit on it, and I can do no more for it.’

‘Thus it always fares with the beautiful in this world!’ said the poet.

And he sang a song concerning it, sang it in his own way; but nobody listened. Then he gave the drummer twopence and a peacock’s feather, and set the song for the drum, and had it drummed in all the streets of the town; and the people heard it, and said that they understood it, it was so deep. Then the poet sang several songs of the beautiful, the true, and the good. His songs were listened to in the tavern, where the tallow candles smoked, in the fresh meadow, in the forest, and on the high seas. It appeared as if this brother was to have better fortune than the two others. But the Evil Spirit was angry at this, and accordingly he set to work with incense powder and incense smoke, which he can prepare so artfully as to confuse an angel, and how much more therefore a poor poet! The Evil One knows how to take that kind of people! He surrounded the poet so completely with incense, that the man lost his head, and forgot his mission and his home, and at last himself—and ended in smoke.

But when the little birds heard of this they mourned, and for three days they sang not one song. The black Wood Snail became blacker still, not for grief, but for envy.

‘They should have strewed incense for me,’ she said, ‘for it was I who gave him his idea of the most famous of his songs, the drum song of “The Way of the World”; it was I who spat upon the rose! I can bring witness to the fact.’

But no tidings of all this penetrated to the poet’s home in India, for all the birds were silent for three days; and when the time of mourning was over, their grief had been so deep that they had forgotten for whom they wept. That’s the usual way!

‘Now I shall have to go out into the world, to disappear like the rest,’ said the fourth brother.

He had just as good a humour as the third, but he was no poet, and so he had good reason to have good humour. Those two had filled the castle with cheerfulness, and now the last cheerfulness was going away. Sight and hearing have always been looked upon as the two chief senses of men, and as the two that it is most desirable to sharpen; the other senses are looked upon as of less consequence. But that was not the opinion of this son, as he had especially cultivated his *taste* in every respect, and taste is very powerful. It holds sway over what goes into the mouth, and also over what penetrates into the mind; and consequently this brother tasted everything that was stored up in bottles and pots, saying that this was the rough work of his office. Every man was to him a vessel in which something was seething, every country an enormous kitchen, a kitchen of the mind.

‘That was the fine work,’ he said; and he wanted to go out and try what was delicate. ‘Perhaps fortune may be more favourable to me than it was to my brothers,’ he said. ‘I shall start on my travels. But what conveyance shall I choose? Are air balloons invented yet?’ he asked his father, who knew of all inventions that had been made or that were to be made. But air balloons had not yet been invented, nor steam-ships, nor railways. ‘Good: then I shall choose an air balloon,’ he said; ‘my father knows how they are made and guided. Nobody has invented them yet, and consequently the people will believe that it

is an aerial phantom. When I have used the balloon I will burn it, and for this purpose you must give me a few pieces of the invention that will be made next—I mean chemical matches.'

And he obtained what he wanted, and flew away. The birds accompanied him farther than they had flown with the other brothers. They were curious to know what would be the result of the flight, and more of them came sweeping up: they thought he was some new bird; and he soon had a goodly following. The air became black with birds, they came on like a cloud—like the cloud of locusts over the land of Egypt.

Now he was out in the wide world.

'I have had a good friend and helper in the East Wind,' he said.

'The East and the West Wind, you mean,' said the winds. 'We have been both at work, otherwise you would not have come north-west.'

But he did not hear what the winds said, and it does not matter either. The birds had also ceased to accompany him. When they were most numerous, a few of them became tired of the journey. Too much was made of this kind of thing, they said. He had got fancies into his head. 'There is nothing at all to fly after; there is nothing; it's quite stupid;' and so they stayed behind, the whole flock of them.

The air balloon descended over one of the greatest cities, and the aeronaut took up his station on the highest point, on the church steeple. The balloon rose again, which it ought not to have done: where it went to is not known, but that was not a matter of consequence, for it was not yet invented. Then he sat on the church steeple. The birds no longer hovered around him, they had got tired of him, and he was tired of them.

All the chimneys in the town were smoking merrily.

'Those are altars erected to thy honour!' said the Wind, who wished to say something agreeable to him.

He sat boldly up there, and looked down upon the people in the street. There was one stepping along, proud of his purse, another of the key he carried at his girdle, though he had nothing to unlock; one proud of his moth-eaten coat, another of his wasted body.

‘Vanity ! I must hasten downward, dip my finger in the pot, and taste !’ he said. ‘But for a while I will still sit here, for the wind blows so pleasantly against my back. I’ll sit here as long as the wind blows. I’ll enjoy a slight rest. “It is good to sleep long in the morning, when one has much to do,” says the lazy man, but laziness is the root of all evil, and there is no evil in our family. I’ll stop here as long as this wind blows, for it pleases me.’

And there he sat, but he was sitting upon the weather-cock of the steeple, which kept turning round and round with him, so that he thought that the same wind still blew ; so he might stay up there a goodly while.

But in India, in the castle in the Tree of the Sun, it was solitary and still, since the brothers had gone away one after the other.

‘It goes not well with them,’ said the father ; ‘they will never bring the gleaming jewel home ; it is not made for me : they are gone, they are dead !’

And he bent down over the Book of Truth, and gazed at the page on which he should read of life after death ; but for him nothing was to be seen or learned upon it.

The blind daughter was his consolation and joy ; she attached herself with sincere affection to him, and for the sake of his peace and joy she wished the costly jewel might be found and brought home. With sorrow and longing she thought of her brothers. Where were they ? Where did they live ? She wished sincerely that she might dream of them, but it was strange, not even in dreams could she approach them. But at length, one night she dreamed that the voices of her brothers sounded across to her, calling to her from the wide world, and she could not refrain, but went far far out, and yet it seemed in her dream that she was still in her father’s house. She did not meet her brothers, but she felt, as it were, a fire burning in her hand, but it did not hurt her, for it was the jewel she was bringing to her father. When she awoke, she thought for a moment that she still held the stone, but it was the knob of her distaff that she was grasping. During the long nights she had spun incessantly, and round the distaff was turned a thread, finer than the finest web of the spider ;

human eyes were unable to distinguish the separate threads. She had wetted them with her tears, and the twist was strong as a cable. She rose, and her resolution was taken: the dream must be made a reality. It was night, and her father slept. She pressed a kiss upon his hand, and then took her distaff, and fastened the end of the thread to her father's house. But for this, blind as she was, she would never have found her way home; to the thread she must hold fast, and trust not to herself or to others. From the Tree of the Sun she broke four leaves; these she would confide to wind and weather, that they might fly to her brothers as a letter and a greeting, in case she did not meet them in the wide world. How would she fare out there, she, the poor blind child? But she had the invisible thread to which she could hold fast. She possessed a gift which all the others lacked. This was *thoroughness*; and in virtue of this it seemed as if she had eyes at the tips of her fingers and ears down in her very heart.

And quietly she went forth into the noisy, whirling, wonderful world, and wherever she went the sky grew bright—she felt the warm ray—the rainbow spread itself out from the dark cloud through the blue air. She heard the song of the birds, and smelt the scent of orange groves and apple orchards so strongly that she seemed to taste it. Soft tones and charming songs reached her ear, but also howling and roaring, and thoughts and opinions sounded in strange contradiction to each other. Into the innermost depths of her heart penetrated the echoes of human thoughts and feelings. One chorus sounded darkly—

The life of earth is a shadow vain
A night created for sorrow!

but then came another strain—

The life of earth is the scent of the rose,
With its sunshine and its pleasure.

And if one strophe sounded painfully—

Each mortal thinks of himself alone,
This truth has been shown, how often!

on the other side the answer pealed forth—

A mighty stream of warmest love
All through the world shall bear us.

She heard, indeed, the words—

In the little petty whirl here below,
Each thing shows mean and paltry ;

but then came also the comfort—

Many things great and good are achieved,
That the ear of man heareth never.

And if sometimes the mocking strain sounded around her—

Join in the common cry ; with a jest
Destroy the good gifts of the Giver,

in the blind girl's heart a stronger voice repeated—

To trust in thyself and in God is best ;
His will be done for ever.

And whenever she entered the circle of human kind, and appeared among young or old, the knowledge of the true, the good, and the beautiful beamed into their hearts. Whether she entered the study of the artist, or the festive decorated hall, or the crowded factory, with its whirring wheels, it seemed as though a sunbeam were stealing in—as if the sweet string sounded, the flower exhaled its perfume, and a living dew-drop fell upon the exhausted leaf.

But the Evil Spirit could not see this and be content. He has more cunning than ten thousand men, and he found out a way to compass his end. He betook himself to the marsh, collected little bubbles of the stagnant water, and passed over them a sevenfold echo of lying words to give them strength. Then he pounded up paid-for eulogies and lying epitaphs, as many as he could get, boiled them in tears that envy had shed, put upon them rouge he had scraped from faded cheeks, and of these he composed a maiden, with the aspect and gait of the blessed blind girl, the angel of thoroughness ; and then the Evil One's plot was in full progress. The world knew not which of the two was the true one ; and, indeed, how should the world know ?

‘ To trust in thyself and in God is best ;
His good will be done for ever,’

sang the blind girl, in full faith. She entrusted the four green leaves from the Tree of the Sun to the winds, as

a letter and a greeting to her brothers, and had full confidence that they would reach their destination, and that the jewel would be found which outshines all the glories of the world. From the forehead of humanity it would gleam even to the castle of her father.

‘Even to my father’s house,’ she repeated. ‘Yes, the place of the jewel is on earth, and I shall bring more than the promise of it with me. I feel its glow, it swells more and more in my closed hand. Every grain of truth, were it never so fine, which the sharp wind carried up and whirled towards me, I took up and treasured; I let it be penetrated by the fragrance of the beautiful, of which there is so much in the world, even for the blind. I took the sound of the beating heart engaged in what is good, and added it to the first. All that I bring is but dust, but still it is the dust of the jewel we seek, and in plenty. I have my whole hand full of it.’

And she stretched forth her hand towards her father. She was soon at home—she had travelled thither in the flight of thoughts, never having quitted her hold of the invisible thread from the paternal home.

The evil powers rushed with hurricane fury over the Tree of the Sun, pressed with a wind-blast against the open doors, and into the sanctuary.

‘It will be blown away by the wind!’ said the father, and he seized the hand she had opened.

‘No,’ she replied, with quiet confidence, ‘it cannot be blown away; I feel the beam warming my very soul.’

And the father became aware of a glancing flame, there where the shining dust poured out of her hand over the Book of Truth, that was to tell of the certainty of an everlasting life; and on it stood one shining word—one only word—‘Faith.’

And with the father and daughter were again the four brothers. When the green leaf fell upon the bosom of each, a longing for home had seized them and led them back. They had arrived. The birds of passage, and the stag, the antelope, and all the creatures of the forest followed them, for all wished to have a part in their joy.

We have often seen, where a sunbeam bursts through a crack in the door into the dusty room, how a whirling

column of dust seems circling round ; but this was not poor and insignificant like common dust, for even the rainbow is dead in colour compared with the beauty which showed itself. Thus, from the leaf of the book with the beaming word '*Faith*', arose every grain of truth, decked with the charms of *the beautiful* and *the good*, burning brighter than the mighty pillar of flame that led Moses and the children of Israel through the desert ; and from the word '*Faith*' went the bridge of *Hope* the Infinite.

SOUP ON A SAUSAGE-PEG

I

'THAT was a remarkably fine dinner yesterday,' observed an old Mouse of the female sex to another who had not been at the festive gathering. 'I sat number twenty-one from the old Mouse King, so that I was not badly placed. Should you like to hear the order of the banquet ? The courses were very well arranged—mouldy bread, bacon rind, tallow candle, and sausage—and then the same dishes over again from the beginning : it was just as good as having two banquets on end. There was as much joviality and agreeable jesting as in the family circle. Nothing was left but the pegs at the ends of the sausages. And the discourse turned upon these ; and at last the expression, "Soup on a sausage-peg," was mentioned. Every one had heard the proverb, but no one had ever tasted the sausage-peg soup, much less knew how to prepare it. A capital toast was drunk to the inventor of the soup, and it was said he deserved to be a relieving officer. Was not that witty ? And the old Mouse King stood up, and promised that the young mouse who could best prepare that soup should be his queen ; and a year was allowed for the trial.'

'That was not at all bad,' said the other Mouse ; 'but how does one prepare this soup ?'

'Ah, how is it prepared ? That is just what all the young female mice, and the old ones too, are asking. They would all very much like to be queen ; but they don't want

to take the trouble to go out into the world to learn how to prepare the soup, and that they would certainly have to do. But every one has not the gift of leaving the family circle and the chimney corner. Away from home one can't get cheese rinds and bacon every day. No, one must bear hunger, and perhaps be eaten up alive by a cat.'

Such were no doubt the thoughts by which most of them were scared from going out to gain information. Only four Mice announced themselves ready to depart. They were young and brisk, but poor. Each of them would go to one of the four quarters of the globe, and then it was a question which of them was favoured by fortune. Every one took a sausage-peg, so as to keep in mind the object of the journey. This was to be their pilgrim's staff.

It was at the beginning of May that they set out, and they did not return till the May of the following year; and then only three of them appeared. The fourth did not report herself, nor was there any intelligence of her, though the day of trial was close at hand.

'Yes, there's always some drawback in even the pleasantest affair,' said the Mouse King.

And then he gave orders that all mice within a circuit of many miles should be invited. They were to assemble in the kitchen, the three travelled Mice stood in a row by themselves, while a sausage-peg, shrouded in crape, was set up as a memento of the fourth, who was missing. No one was to proclaim his opinion before the three had spoken and the Mouse King had settled what was to be said further. And now let us hear.

II

WHAT THE FIRST LITTLE MOUSE HAD SEEN AND LEARNED IN HER TRAVELS

'When I went out into the wide world,' said the little Mouse, 'I thought, as many think at my age, that I had already learned everything; but that was not the case. Years must pass before one gets so far. I went to sea at once. I went in a ship that steered towards the north.

They had told me that the ship's cook must know how to manage things at sea ; but it is easy enough to manage things when one has plenty of sides of bacon, and whole tubs of salt pork, and mouldy flour. One has delicate living on board ; but one does not learn to prepare soup on a sausage-peg. We sailed along for many days and nights ; the ship rocked fearfully, and we did not get off without a wetting. When we at last reached the port to which we were bound, I left the ship ; and it was high up in the far north.

‘ It is a wonderful thing, to go out of one's own corner at home, and sail in a ship, where one has a sort of corner too, and then suddenly to find oneself hundreds of miles away in a strange land. I saw great pathless forests of pine and birch, which smelt so strong that I sneezed, and thought of sausage. There were great lakes there too. When I came close to them the waters were quite clear, but from a distance they looked black as ink. White swans floated upon them : I thought at first they were spots of foam, they lay so still ; but then I saw them walk and fly, and I recognized them. They belong to the goose family—one can see that by their walk ; for no one can deny his parentage. I kept with my own kind. I associated with the forest and field mice, who, by the way, know very little, especially as regards cookery, though this was the very thing that had brought me abroad. The thought that soup might be boiled on a sausage-peg was such a startling idea to them, that it flew at once from mouth to mouth through the whole forest. They declared the problem could never be solved ; and little did I think that there, on the very first night, I should be initiated into the method of its preparation. It was in the height of summer, and that, the mice said, was the reason why the wood smelt so strongly, and why the herbs were so fragrant, and the lakes so clear and yet so dark, with the white swans on them.

‘ On the margin of the wood, among three or four houses, a pole as tall as the mainmast of a ship had been erected, and from its summit hung wreaths and ribbons : this was called a maypole. Men and maids danced round the tree, and sang as loudly as they could, to the violin of the fiddler. There were merry doings at sundown and in the moonlight,

but I took no part in them—what has a little mouse to do with a May dance ? I sat in the soft moss and held my sausage-peg fast. The moon shone especially upon one spot, where a tree stood, covered with moss so fine that I may almost venture to say it was as fine as the skin of the Mouse King ; but it was of a green colour, so that it was a great relief to the eye.

‘All at once, the most charming little people came marching forth. They were only tall enough to reach to my knee. They looked like men, but were better proportioned : they called themselves elves, and had delicate clothes on, of flower leaves trimmed with the wings of flies and gnats, which had a very good appearance. Directly they appeared, they seemed to be seeking for something—I knew not what ; but at last some of them came towards me, and the chief pointed to my sausage-peg, and said, “That is just such a one as we want—it is pointed—it is capital !” and the longer he looked at my pilgrim’s staff the more delighted he became.

“I will lend it,” I said, “but not to keep.”

“Not to keep !” they all repeated ; and they seized the sausage-peg, which I gave up to them, and danced away to the spot where the fine moss grew ; and here they set up the peg in the midst of the green. They wanted to have a maypole of their own, and the one they now had, seemed cut out for them ; and they decorated it so that it was beautiful to behold.

‘First, little spiders spun it round with gold thread, and hung it all over with fluttering veils and flags, so finely woven, bleached so snowy white in the moonshine, that they dazzled my eyes. They took colours from the butterfly’s wing, and strewed these over the white linen, and flowers and diamonds gleamed upon it, so that I did not know my sausage-peg again : there is not in all the world such a maypole as they had made of it. And now came the real great party of elves. They were quite without clothes, and looked as dainty as possible ; and they invited me to be present ; but I was to keep at a distance, for I was too large for them.

‘And now began such music ! It sounded like thousands of glass bells, so full, so rich, that I thought the swans were

singing. I fancied also that I heard the voice of the cuckoo and the blackbird, and at last the whole forest seemed to join in. I heard children's voices, the sound of bells, and the song of birds; the most glorious melodies—and all came from the elves' maypole, namely, my sausage-peg. I should never have believed that so much could come out of it; but that depends very much upon the hands into which it falls. I was quite touched. I wept, as a little mouse may weep, with pure pleasure.

'The night was far too short; but it is not longer up yonder at that season. In the morning dawn the breeze began to blow, the mirror of the forest lake was covered with ripples, and all the delicate veils and flags fluttered away in the air. The waving garlands of spiders' web, the hanging bridges and balustrades, and whatever else they are called, flew away as if they were nothing at all. Six elves brought me back my sausage-peg, and asked me at the same time if I had any wish that they could gratify; so I asked them if they could tell me how soup was made on a sausage-peg.

"How *we* do it?" asked the chief of the elves, with a smile. "Why, you have just seen it. I fancy you hardly knew your sausage-peg again?"

"You only mean that as a joke," I replied. And then I told them in so many words, why I had undertaken a journey, and what hopes were founded on it at home. "What advantage," I asked, "can it be to our Mouse King, and to our whole powerful state, from the fact of my having witnessed all this festivity? I cannot shake it out of the sausage-peg, and say, 'Look, here is the peg, now the soup will come.' That would be a dish that could only be put on the table when the guests had dined."

'Then the elf dipped his little finger into the cup of a blue violet, and said to me,

"See here! I will anoint your pilgrim's staff; and when you go back home to the castle of the Mouse King, you have but to touch his warm breast with the staff, and violets will spring forth and cover its whole staff, even in the coldest winter-time. And so I think I've given you something to carry home, and a little more than something!"

But before the little Mouse said what this ‘something more’ was, she stretched her staff out towards the King’s breast, and in very truth the most beautiful bunch of violets burst forth ; and the scent was so powerful that the Mouse King incontinently ordered the mice who stood nearest the chimney to thrust their tails into the fire and create a smell of burning, for the odour of the violets was not to be borne, and was not of the kind he liked.

‘But what was the “something more”, of which you spoke?’ asked the Mouse King.

‘Why,’ the little Mouse answered, ‘I think it is what they call effect!’ and herewith she turned the staff round, and lo! there was not a single flower to be seen upon it ; she only held the naked skewer, and lifted this up like a music *bâton*. ““Violets,” the elf said to me, “are for sight, and smell, and touch. Therefore it yet remains to provide for hearing and taste!”’

And now the little Mouse began to beat time ; and music was heard, not such as sounded in the forest among the elves, but such as is heard in the kitchen. There was a bubbling sound of boiling and roasting ; and all at once it seemed as if the sound were rushing through every chimney, and pots or kettles were boiling over. The fire-shovel hammered upon the brass kettle, and then, on a sudden, all was quiet again. They heard the quiet subdued song of the tea-kettle, and it was wonderful to hear—they could not quite tell if the kettle were beginning to sing or leaving off ; and the little pot simmered, and the big pot simmered, and neither cared for the other : there seemed to be no reason at all in the pots. And the little Mouse flourished her *bâton* more and more wildly ; the pots foamed, threw up large bubbles, boiled over, and the wind roared and whistled through the chimney. Oh! it became so terrible that the little Mouse lost her stick at last.

‘That was a heavy soup!’ said the Mouse King. ‘Shall we not soon hear about the preparation?’

‘That was all,’ said the little Mouse, with a bow.

‘That all! Then we should be glad to hear what the next has to relate,’ said the Mouse King.

III

WHAT THE SECOND LITTLE MOUSE HAD TO TELL

‘I was born in the palace library,’ said the second Mouse. ‘I and several members of our family never knew the happiness of getting into the dining-room, much less into the store-room; on my journey, and here to-day, are the only times I have seen a kitchen. We have indeed often been compelled to suffer hunger in the library, but we got a good deal of knowledge. The rumour penetrated even to us, of the royal prize offered to those who could cook soup upon a sausage-peg; and it was my old grandmother who thereupon ferreted out a manuscript, which she certainly could not read, but which she had heard read out, and in which it was written: “Those who are poets can boil soup upon a sausage-peg.” She asked me if I were a poet. I felt quite innocent of that, and then she told me I must go out, and manage to become one. I again asked what was required for that, for it was as difficult for me to find that out as to prepare the soup; but grandmother had heard a good deal of reading, and she said that three things were especially necessary: “Understanding, imagination, feeling—if you can go and get these into you, you are a poet, and the sausage-peg affair will be quite easy to you.”’

‘And I went forth, and marched towards the west, away into the wide world, to become a poet.

‘Understanding is the most important thing in every affair. I knew that, for the two other things are not held in half such respect, and consequently I went out first to seek understanding. Yes, where does that dwell? “Go to the ant and be wise,” said the great King of the Jews; I knew that from the library; and I never stopped till I came to the first great ant-hill, and there I placed myself on the watch, to become wise.

‘The ants are a respectable people. They are understanding itself. Everything with them is like a well-worked sum, that comes right. To work and to lay eggs, they say, is to live while you live, and to provide for posterity; and accordingly that is what they do. They were divided into the clean and the dirty ants. The rank

of each is indicated by a number, and the ant queen is number ONE ; and her view is the only correct one, she has absorbed all wisdom ; and that was important for me to know. She spoke so much, and it was all so clever, that it sounded to me like nonsense. She declared her ant-hill was the loftiest thing in the world ; though close by it grew a tree, which was certainly loftier, much loftier, that could not be denied, and therefore it was never mentioned. One evening an ant had lost herself upon the tree ; she had crept up the stem—not up to the crown, but higher than any ant had climbed until then ; and when she turned, and came back home, she talked of something far higher than the ant-hill that she had found ; but the other ants considered that an insult to the whole community, and consequently she was condemned to wear a muzzle, and to continual solitary confinement. But a short time afterwards another ant got on the tree, and made the same journey and the same discovery : and this one spoke about it with caution and indefiniteness, as they said ; and as, moreover, she was one of the pure ants and very much respected, they believed her ; and when she died they erected an egg-shell as a memorial of her, for they had a great respect for the sciences. I saw,’ continued the little Mouse, ‘that the ants are always running to and fro with their eggs on their backs. One of them once dropped her egg ; she exerted herself greatly to pick it up again, but she could not succeed. Then two others came up, and helped her with all their might, insomuch that they nearly dropped their own eggs over it ; but then they stopped helping at once, for each should think of himself first—the ant queen had declared that by so doing they exhibited at once heart and understanding.

“These two qualities,” she said, “place us ants on the highest step among all reasoning beings. Understanding must and shall be the predominant thing, and I have the greatest share of understanding.” And so saying, she raised herself on her hind legs, so that she was easily to be recognized. I could not be mistaken, and I ate her up. Go to the ant and be wise—and I had got the queen !

‘I now proceeded nearer to the before-mentioned lofty tree. It was an oak, and had a great trunk and a far-spread-

ing top, and was very old. I knew that a living being dwelt here, a Dryad as it is called, who is born with the tree, and dies with it. I had heard about this in the library ; and now I saw an oak tree and an oak girl. She uttered a piercing cry when she saw me so near. Like all females, she was very much afraid of mice ; and she had more ground for fear than others, for I might have gnawed through the stem of the tree on which her life depended. I spoke to her in a friendly and intimate way, and bade her take courage. And she took me up in her delicate hand ; and when I had told her my reason for coming out into the wide world, she promised me that perhaps on that very evening I should have one of the two treasures of which I was still in quest. She told me that Phantasy was her very good friend, that he was beautiful as the god of love, and that he rested many an hour under the leafy boughs of the tree, which then rustled more strongly than ever over the pair of them. He called her his Dryad, she said, and the tree his tree, for the grand gnarled oak was just to his taste, with its root burrowing so deep in the earth and the stem and crown rising so high out in the fresh air, and knowing the beating snow, and the sharp wind, and the warm sunshine, as they deserve to be known. “ Yes,” the Dryad continued, “ the birds sing aloft there and tell of strange countries ; and on the only dead bough the stork has built a nest which is highly ornamental, and, moreover, one gets to hear something of the land of the pyramids. All that is very pleasing to Phantasy ; but it is not enough for him : I myself must tell him of life in the woods, when I was little, and the tree such a delicate thing that a stinging-nettle overshadowed it—and I have to tell everything, till now that the tree is great and strong. Sit you down under the green woodruff, and pay attention ; and when Phantasy comes, I shall find an opportunity to pinch his wings, and to pull out a little feather. Take that—no better is given to any poet—and it will be enough for you ! ”

‘ And when Phantasy came the feather was plucked, and I seized it,’ said the little Mouse. ‘ I held it in water, till it grew soft. It was very hard to digest, but I nibbled it up at last. It is not at all easy to gnaw oneself into being

a poet, there are so many things one must take into oneself. Now I had these two things, imagination and understanding, and through these I knew that the third was to be found in the library ; for a great man has said and written that there are romances whose sole and single use is that they relieve people of their superfluous tears, and that they are, in fact, like sponges sucking up human emotion. I remembered a few of these old books, which had always looked especially palatable, and were much thumbed and very greasy, having evidently absorbed a great deal of feeling into themselves.

‘I betook myself back to the library, and devoured nearly a whole novel—that is, the essence of it, the soft part, for I left the crust or binding. When I had digested this, and a second one in addition, I felt a stirring within me, and I ate a bit of a third romance, and now I was a poet. I said so to myself, and told the others also. I had headache, and stomach-ache, and I can’t tell what aches besides. I began thinking what kind of stories could be made to refer to a sausage-peg ; and many pegs came into my mind—the ant queen must have had a particularly fine understanding. I remembered the man who took a white peg in his mouth, and then both he and the peg were invisible. I thought of being screwed up a peg, of standing on one’s own pegs, and of driving a peg into one’s own coffin. All my thoughts ran upon pegs ; and when one is a poet (and I am a poet, for I have worked most terribly hard to become one) a person can make poetry on these subjects. I shall therefore be able to wait upon you every day with a poem or a history—and that’s the soup I have to offer.’

‘Let us hear what the third has to say,’ said the Mouse King.

‘Peep ! peep !’ was heard at the kitchen door, and a little Mouse—it was the fourth of them, the one whom they looked upon as dead—shot in like an arrow. She toppled the sausage-peg with the crape covering over. She had been running day and night, and had travelled on the railway, in the goods train, having watched her opportunity, and yet she had almost come too late. She pressed forward, looking very much rumpled, and she had lost her sausage-peg, but not her voice, for she at once took

up the word, as if they had been waiting only for her, and wanted to hear none but her, and as if everything else in the world were of no consequence. She spoke at once, and spoke fully : she had appeared so suddenly that no one found time to object to her speech or to her, while she was speaking. And now let us hear her.

IV

WHAT THE FOURTH MOUSE, WHO SPOKE BEFORE THE THIRD HAD SPOKEN, HAD TO TELL

I went immediately to the largest town,' she said ; 'the name has escaped me—I have a bad memory for names. From the railway I was carried, with some confiscated goods, to the council-house, and there I ran into the dwelling of the jailer. The jailer was talking of his prisoners, and especially of one, who had spoken unconsidered words. These words had given rise to others, and these latter had been written down and recorded.

“The whole thing is soup on a sausage-peg,” said the jailer ; “but the soup may cost him his neck.”

‘Now, this gave me an interest in the prisoner,’ continued the Mouse, ‘and I watched my opportunity and slipped into his prison—for there’s a mouse-hole to be found behind every locked door. The prisoner looked pale, and had a great beard and bright sparkling eyes. The lamp smoked, but the walls were so accustomed to that, that they grew none the blacker for it. The prisoner scratched pictures and verses in white upon the black ground, but I did not read them. I think he found it tedious, and I was a welcome guest. He lured me with bread crumbs, with whistling, and with friendly words : he was glad to see me, and I got to trust him, and we became friends. He shared with me his bread and water, gave me cheese and sausage ; I lived well, but I must say that it was especially the good society that kept me there. He let me run upon his hand, his arm, and into his sleeve ; he let me creep about in his beard, and called me his little friend. I really got to love him, for these things are reciprocal. I forgot my mission in the wide world, forgot

my sausage-peg in a crack in the floor—it's lying there still. I wished to stay where I was, for if I went away the poor prisoner would have no one at all, and that's having *too* little, in this world. *I* stayed, but *he* did not stay. He spoke to me very mournfully the last time, gave me twice as much bread and cheese as usual, and kissed his hand to me; then he went away, and never came back. I don't know his history.

“Soup on a sausage-peg!” said the jailer, to whom I now went; but I should not have trusted him. He took me in his hand, certainly, but he popped me into a cage, a treadmill. That's a horrible engine, in which you go round and round without getting any farther; and people laugh at you into the bargain.

“The jailer's granddaughter was a charming little thing, with a mass of curly hair that shone like gold, and such merry eyes, and such a smiling mouth!

“You poor little mouse,” she said, as she peeped into my ugly cage; and she drew out the iron rod, and forth I jumped to the window board, and from thence to the roof spout. Free! free! I thought only of that, and not of the goal of my journey.

“It was dark, and night was coming on. I took up my quarters in an old tower, where dwelt a watchman and an owl. I trusted neither of them, and the owl least. That is a creature like a cat, who has the great failing that she eats mice. But one may be mistaken, and so was I, for this was a very respectable, well-educated old owl: she knew more than the watchman, and as much as I. The young owls were always making a racket; but “Do not make soup on a sausage-peg” were the hardest words she could prevail on herself to utter, she was so fondly attached to her family. Her conduct inspired me with so much confidence, that from the crack in which I was crouching I called out “Peep!” to her. This confidence of mine pleased her hugely, and she assured me I should be under her protection, and that no creature should be allowed to do me wrong; she would reserve me for herself, for the winter, when there would be short commons.

“She was in every respect a clever woman, and explained to me how the watchman could only “whoop” with the

horn that hung at his side, adding, "He is terribly conceited about it, and imagines he's an owl in the tower. Wants to do great things, but is very small—soup on a sausage-peg!"

"I begged the owl to give me the recipe for this soup, and then she explained the matter to me.

" "Soup on a sausage-peg," she said, "was only a human proverb, and was understood in different ways: Each thinks his own way the best, but the whole really signifies nothing."

" "Nothing!" I exclaimed. I was quite struck. Truth is not always agreeable, but truth is above everything; and that's what the old owl said. I now thought about it, and readily perceived that if I brought what was *above everything* I brought something far beyond soup on a sausage-peg. So I hastened away, that I might get home in time, and bring the highest and best, that is above everything—namely, *the truth*. The mice are an enlightened people, and the King is above them all. He is capable of making me Queen, for the sake of truth."

"Your truth is a falsehood," said the Mouse who had not yet spoken. "I can prepare the soup, and I mean to prepare it."

V

HOW IT WAS PREPARED

"I did not travel," the third Mouse said. "I remained in my country—that's the right thing to do. There's no necessity for travelling; one can get everything as good here. I stayed at home. I've not learned what I know from supernatural beings, or gobbled it up, or held converse with owls. I have what I know through my own reflections. Will you just put that kettle upon the fire and get water poured in up to the brim! Now make up the fire, that the water may boil—it must boil over and over! Now throw the peg in. Will the King now be pleased to dip his tail in the boiling water, and to stir it round? The longer the King stirs it, the more powerful will the soup become. It costs nothing at all—no further materials are necessary, only stir it round!"

‘Cannot any one else do that?’ asked the Mouse King.

‘No,’ replied the Mouse. ‘The power is contained only in the tail of the Mouse King.’

And the water boiled and bubbled, and the Mouse King stood close beside the kettle—there was almost danger in it—and he put forth his tail, as the mice do in the dairy, when they skim the cream from a pan of milk, and afterwards lick the tail; but he only got his into the hot steam, and then he sprang hastily down from the hearth.

‘Of course—certainly you are my Queen,’ he said. ‘We’ll wait for the soup till our golden wedding, so that the poor of my subjects may have something to which they can look forward with pleasure for a long time.’

And soon the wedding was held. But many of the mice said, as they were returning home, that it could not be really called soup on a sausage-peg, but rather soup on a mouse’s tail. They said that some of the stories had been very cleverly told; but the whole thing might have been different. ‘*I* should have told it so—and so—and so!’

Thus said the critics, who are always wise—after the fact.

And this story went round the world; and opinions varied concerning it, but the story remained as it was. And that’s the best in great things and in small, so also with regard to soup on a sausage-peg—not to expect any thanks for it.

THE LAST DREAM OF THE OLD OAK TREE

A CHRISTMAS TALE

IN the forest, high up on the steep shore, hard by the open sea coast, stood a very old Oak Tree. It was exactly three hundred and sixty-five years old, but that long time was not more for the Tree than just as many days would be to us men. We wake by day and sleep through the night, and then we have our dreams: it is different with the Tree, which keeps awake through three seasons of the year, and does not get its sleep till winter comes. Winter is its time for rest, its night after the long day which is called spring, summer, and autumn.

On many a warm summer day the Ephemera, the fly that lives but for a day, had danced around his crown—had lived, enjoyed, and felt happy ; and then the tiny creature had rested for a moment in quiet bliss on one of the great fresh Oak leaves ; and then the Tree always said,

‘ Poor little thing ! Your whole life is but a single day ! How very short ! It ’s quite melancholy.’

‘ Melancholy ! Why do you say that ? ’ the Ephemera would then always reply. ‘ It ’s wonderfully bright, warm, and beautiful all around me, and that makes me rejoice.’

‘ But only one day, and then it ’s all done ! ’

‘ Done ! ’ repeated the Ephemera. ‘ What ’s the meaning of *done* ? Are you *done*, too ? ’

‘ No ; I shall perhaps live for thousands of your days, and my day is whole seasons long ! It ’s something so long, that you can’t at all manage to reckon it out.’

‘ No ? then I don’t understand you. You say you have thousands of my days ; but I have thousands of moments, in which I can be merry and happy. Does all the beauty of this world cease when you die ? ’

‘ No,’ replied the Tree ; ‘ it will certainly last much longer—far longer than I can possibly think.’

‘ Well, then, we have the same time, only that we reckon differently.’

And the Ephemera danced and floated in the air, and rejoiced in her delicate wings of gauze and velvet, and rejoiced in the balmy breezes laden with the fragrance of the meadows and of wild roses and elder flowers, of the garden hedges, wild thyme, and mint, and daisies ; the scent of these was all so strong that the Ephemera was almost intoxicated. The day was long and beautiful, full of joy and of sweet feeling, and when the sun sank low the little fly felt very agreeably tired of all its happiness and enjoyment. The delicate wings would not carry it any more, and quietly and slowly it glided down upon the soft grass-blade, nodded its head as well as it could nod, and went quietly to sleep—and was dead.

‘ Poor little Ephemera ! ’ said the Oak. ‘ That was a terribly short life ! ’

And on every summer day the same dance was repeated, the same question and answer, and the same sleep. The

same thing was repeated through whole generations of Ephemerae, and all of them felt equally merry and equally happy.

The Oak stood there awake through the spring morning, the noon of summer, and the evening of autumn ; and its time of rest, its night, was coming on apace. Winter was approaching.

Already the storms were singing their ‘ good night ! good night ! ’ Here fell a leaf, and there fell a leaf.

‘ We pull ! See if you can sleep ! We sing you to sleep, we shake you to sleep, but it does you good in your old twigs, does it not ? They seem to crack for very joy. Sleep sweetly ! sleep sweetly ! It ’s your three hundred and sixty-fifth night. Properly speaking, you’re only a year old yet ! Sleep sweetly ! The clouds strew down snow, there will be quite a coverlet, warm and protecting, around your feet. Sweet sleep to you, and pleasant dreams ! ’

And the old Oak Tree stood there, stripped of all its leaves, to sleep through the long winter, and to dream many a dream, always about something that had happened to it, just as in the dreams of men.

The great Oak Tree had once been small—indeed, an acorn had been its cradle. According to human computation, it was now in its fourth century. It was the greatest and best tree in the forest ; its crown towered far above all the other trees, and could be descried from afar across the sea, so that it served as a landmark to the sailors : the Tree had no idea how many eyes were in the habit of seeking it. High up in its green summit the wood-pigeon built her nest, and the cuckoo sat in its boughs and sang his song ; and in autumn, when the leaves looked like thin plates of copper, the birds of passage came and rested there, before they flew away across the sea ; but now it was winter, and the Tree stood there leafless, so that every one could see how gnarled and crooked the branches were that shot forth from its trunk. Crows and rooks came and took their seat by turns in the boughs, and spoke of the hard times which were beginning, and of the difficulty of getting a living in winter.

It was just at the holy Christmas-time, when the Tree dreamed its most glorious dream.

The Tree had a distinct feeling of the festive time, and fancied he heard the bells ringing from the churches all around ; and yet it seemed as if it were a fine summer's day, mild and warm. Fresh and green he spread out his mighty crown ; the sunbeams played among the twigs and the leaves ; the air was full of the fragrance of herbs and blossoms ; gay butterflies chased each other to and fro. The ephemeral insects danced as if all the world were created merely for them to dance and be merry in. All that the Tree had experienced for years and years, and that had happened around him, seemed to pass by him again, as in a festive pageant. He saw the knights of ancient days ride by with their noble dames on gallant steeds, with plumes waving in their bonnets and falcons on their wrists. The hunting horn sounded, and the dogs barked. He saw hostile warriors in coloured jerkins and with shining weapons, with spear and halberd, pitching their tents and striking them again. The watchfires flamed up anew, and men sang and slept under the branches of the Tree. He saw loving couples meeting near his trunk, happily, in the moonshine ; and they cut the initials of their names in the grey-green bark of his stem. Once—but long years had rolled by since then—citherns and Æolian harps had been hung up on his boughs by merry wanderers ; now they hung there again, and once again they sounded in tones of marvellous sweetness. The wood-pigeons cooed, as if they were telling what the Tree felt in all this, and the cuckoo called out to tell him how many summer days he had yet to live.

Then it appeared to him as if new life were rippling down into the remotest fibre of his root, and mounting up into his highest branches, to the tops of the leaves. The Tree felt that he was stretching and spreading himself, and through his root he felt that there was life and warmth even in the ground itself. He felt his strength increase, he grew higher, his stem shot up unceasingly, and he grew more and more, his crown became fuller and spread out ; and in proportion as the Tree grew, he felt his happiness increase, and his joyous hope that he should reach even higher—quite up to the warm brilliant sun.

Already had he grown high up above the clouds, which

floated past beneath his crown like dark troops of passage-birds, or like great white swans. And every leaf of the Tree had the gift of sight, as if it had eyes wherewith to see : the stars became visible in broad daylight, great and sparkling ; each of them sparkled like a pair of eyes, mild and clear. They recalled to his memory well-known gentle eyes, eyes of children, eyes of lovers, who had met beneath his boughs.

It was a marvellous spectacle, and one full of happiness and joy ! And yet amid all this happiness the Tree felt a longing, a yearning desire that all other trees of the wood beneath him, and all the bushes, and herbs, and flowers, might be able to rise with him, that they too might see this splendour and experience this joy. The great majestic Oak was not quite happy in his happiness, while he had not them all, great and little, about him ; and this feeling of yearning trembled through his every twig, through his every leaf, warmly and fervently as through a human heart.

The crown of the Tree waved to and fro, as if he sought something in his silent longing, and he looked down. Then he felt the fragrance of woodruff, and soon afterwards the more powerful scent of honeysuckle and violets ; and he fancied he heard the cuckoo answering him.

Yes, through the clouds the green summits of the forest came peering up, and under himself the Oak saw the other trees, as they grew and raised themselves aloft. Bushes and herbs shot up high, and some tore themselves up bodily by the roots to rise the quicker. The birch was the quickest of all. Like a white streak of lightning, its slender stem shot upwards in a zigzag line, and the branches spread around it like green gauze and like banners ; the whole woodland natives, even to the brown-plumed rushes, grew up with the rest, and the birds came too, and sang ; and on the grass-blade that fluttered aloft like a long silken ribbon into the air, sat the grasshopper cleaning his wings with his leg ; the May beetles hummed, and the bees murmured, and every bird sang in his appointed manner ; all was song and sound of gladness up into the high heaven.

‘ But the little blue flower by the water-side, where is that ? ’ said the Oak ; ‘ and the purple bell-flower and the daisy ? ’ for, you see, the old Oak Tree wanted to have them all about him.

‘ We are here ! we are here ! ’ was shouted and sung in reply.

‘ But the beautiful woodruff of last summer—and in the last year there was certainly a place here covered with lilies of the valley ! and the wild apple tree that blossomed so splendidly ! and all the glory of the wood that came year by year—if that had only lived and remained till now, then it might have been here now ! ’

‘ We are here ! we are here ! ’ replied voices still higher in the air.

It seemed as if they had flown on before.

‘ Why, that is beautiful, indescribably beautiful ! ’ exclaimed the old Oak Tree, rejoicingly. ‘ I have them all around me, great and small ; not one has been forgotten ! How can so much happiness be imagined ? How can it be possible ? ’

‘ In heaven it can be imagined, and it is possible ! ’ the reply sounded through the air.

And the old Tree, who grew on and on, felt how his roots were tearing themselves free from the ground.

‘ That ’s best of all ! ’ said the Tree. ‘ Now no fetters hold me ! I can fly up now, to the very highest, in glory and in light ! And all my beloved ones are with me, great and small—all of them, all ! ’

That was the dream of the old Oak Tree ; and while he dreamed thus a mighty storm came rushing over land and sea—at the holy Christmastide. The sea rolled great billows towards the shore, and there was a cracking and crashing in the tree—his root was torn out of the ground in the very moment while he was dreaming that his root freed itself from the earth. He fell. His three hundred and sixty-five years were now as the single day of the Ephemera.

On the morning of the Christmas festival, when the sun rose, the storm had subsided. From all the churches sounded the festive bells, and from every hearth, even from the smallest hut, arose the smoke in blue clouds, like the smoke from the altars of the Druids of old at the feast

of thank-offerings. The sea became gradually calm, and on board a great ship in the offing, that had fought successfully with the tempest, all the flags were displayed, as a token of joy suitable to the festive day.

‘The Tree is down—the old Oak Tree, our landmark on the coast!’ said the sailors. ‘It fell in the storm of last night. Who can replace it? No one can.’

This was the funeral oration, short but well meant, that was given to the Tree, which lay stretched on the snowy covering on the sea-shore; and over its prostrate form sounded the notes of a song from the ship, a carol of the joys of Christmas, and of the redemption of the soul of man by the blood of Christ, and of eternal life.

Sing, sing aloud, this blessed morn—
It is fulfilled—and He is born,
Oh, joy without compare!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Thus sounded the old psalm tune, and every one on board the ship felt lifted up in his own way, through the song and the prayer, just as the old Tree had felt lifted up in its last, its most beauteous, dream in the Christmas night.

THE MARSH KING’S DAUGHTER

THE storks tell their little ones very many stories, all of the swamp and the marsh. These stories are generally adapted to the age and capacity of the hearers. The youngest are content if they are told ‘Cribble-crabble, plurry-murry’ as a story, and find it charming; but the older ones want something with a deeper meaning, or at any rate something relating to the family. Of the two oldest and longest stories that have been preserved among the storks we all know the one, namely, that of Moses, who was exposed by his mother on the banks of the Nile, and whom the King’s daughter found, and who afterwards became a great man and the place of whose burial is unknown. That story is very well known.

The second is not known yet, perhaps because it is quite

an inland story. It has been handed down from stork-mamma to stork-mamma, for thousands of years, and each of them has told it better and better ; and now *we'll* tell it best of all.

The first Stork pair who told the story had their summer residence on the wooden house of the Viking, which lay by the wild moor in Wendsyssel : that is to say, if we are to speak out of the abundance of our knowledge, hard by the great moor in the circle of Hjörning, high up by Skagen, the most northern point of Jutland. The wilderness there is still a great wild moss, about which we can read in the official description of the district. It is said that in old times there was here a sea, whose bottom was upheaved ; now the moss extends for miles on all sides, surrounded by damp meadows, and unsteady shaking swamp, and turfy moor, with blueberries and stunted trees. Mists are almost always hovering over this region, which seventy years ago was still inhabited by the wolves. It is certainly rightly called the ' wild moss ' ; and one can easily think how dreary and lonely it must have been, and how much marsh and lake there was here a thousand years ago. Yes, in detail, exactly the same things were seen then that may yet be beheld. The reeds had the same height, and bore the same kind of long leaves and bluish-brown feathery plumes that they bear now ; the birch stood there, with its white bark and its fine loosely-hanging leaves, just as now ; and as regards the living creatures that dwelt here—why, the fly wore its gauzy dress of the same cut that it wears now, and the favourite colours of the stork were white picked out with black, and red stockings. The people certainly wore coats of a different cut from those they now wear ; but whoever stepped out on the shaking moss, be he huntsman or follower, master or servant, met with the same fate a thousand years ago that he would meet with to-day. He sank and went down to the Marsh King, as they called him, who ruled below in the great empire of the moss. They also called him Quagmire King ; but we like the name Marsh King better, and by that name the storks also called him. Very little is known of the Marsh King's rule ; but perhaps that is a good thing.

In the neighbourhood of the moss, close by Limfjorden,

lay the wooden house of the Viking, with its stone water-tight cellars, with its tower and its three projecting stories. On the roof the Stork had built his nest, and Stork-mamma there hatched the eggs, and felt sure that her hatching would come to something.

One evening Stork-papa stayed out very late, and when he came home he looked very bustling and important.

'I've something very terrible to tell you,' he said to the Stork-mamma.

'Let that be,' she replied. 'Remember that I'm hatching the eggs, and you might agitate me, and I might do them a mischief.'

'You must know it,' he continued. 'She has arrived here—the daughter of our host in Egypt—she has dared to undertake the journey here—and she's gone!'

'She who came from the race of the fairies? Oh, tell me all about it! You know I can't bear to be kept long in suspense when I'm hatching eggs.'

'You see, mother, she believed in what the doctor said, and you told me true. She believed that the moss flowers would bring healing to her sick father, and she has flown here in swan's plumage, in company with the other Swan Princesses, who come to the North every year to renew their youth. She has come here, and she is gone!'

'You are much too long-winded!' exclaimed the Stork-mamma, 'and the eggs might catch cold. I can't bear being kept in such suspense!'

'I have kept watch,' said the Stork-papa; 'and to-night, when I went into the reeds—there where the marsh ground will bear me—three swans came. Something in their flight seemed to say to me, "Look out! That's not altogether swan; it's only swan's feathers!" Yes, mother, you have a feeling of intuition just as I have; you can tell whether a thing is right or wrong.'

'Yes, certainly,' she replied; 'but tell me about the Princess. I'm sick of hearing of the swan's feathers.'

'Well, you know that in the middle of the moss there is something like a lake,' continued Stork-papa. 'You can see one corner of it if you raise yourself a little. There, by the reeds and the green mud, lay a great elder stump, and on this the three swans sat, flapping their wings and

looking about them. One of them threw off her plumage, and I immediately recognized her as our own Princess from Egypt ! There she sat, with no covering but her long black hair. I heard her tell the others to pay good heed to the swan's plumage, while she dived down into the water to pluck the flowers which she fancied she saw growing there. The others nodded, and picked up the empty feather dress and took care of it. "I wonder what they will do with it ?" thought I ; and perhaps she asked herself the same question. If so, she got an answer, for the two rose up and flew away with her swan's plumage. "Do thou dive down !" they cried ; "thou shalt never fly more in swan's form, thou shalt never see Egypt again ! Remain thou there in the moss !" And so saying, they tore the swan's plumage into a hundred pieces, so that the feathers whirled about like a snow-storm ; and away they flew—the two faithless Princesses !

'Why, that is terrible !' said Stork-mamma. 'I can't bear to hear it. But now tell me what happened next.'

'The Princess wept and lamented. Her tears fell fast on the elder stump, and the latter moved, for it was the Marsh King himself—he who lives in the moss ! I myself saw it—how the stump of the tree turned round, and ceased to be a tree stump ; long thin branches grew forth from it like arms. Then the poor child was terribly frightened, and sprang away on to the green slimy ground ; but that cannot even carry me, much less her. She sank immediately, and the elder stump dived down too ; and it was he who drew her down. Great black bubbles rose up, and there was no more trace of them. Now the Princess is buried in the wild moss, and never more will she bear away a flower to Egypt. Your heart would have burst mother, if you had seen it.'

'You ought not to tell me anything of the kind at such a time as this,' said Stork-mamma ; 'the eggs might suffer by it. The Princess will find some way of escape ; some one will come to help her. If it had been you or I, or one of our people, it would certainly have been all over with us.'

'But I shall go and look every day to see if anything happens,' said Stork-papa.

And he was as good as his word.

A long time had passed, when at last he saw a green stalk shooting up out of the deep moss. When it reached the surface a leaf spread out and unfolded itself broader and broader; close by it, a bud came out. And one morning, when the Stork flew over the stalk, the bud opened through the power of the strong sunbeams, and in the cup of the flower lay a beautiful child—a little girl—



looking just as if she had risen out of the bath. The little one so closely resembled the Princess from Egypt, that at the first moment the Stork thought it must be the Princess herself; but, on second thoughts, it appeared more probable that it must be the daughter of the Princess and of the Marsh King; and that also explained her being placed in the cup of the water-lily.

‘But she cannot possibly be left lying there,’ thought the Stork; ‘and in my nest there are so many already.’

But stay, I have a thought. The wife of the Viking has no children, and how often has she not wished for a little one ! People always say, "The stork has brought a little one ;" and I will do so in earnest this time. I shall fly with the child to the Viking's wife. What rejoicing there will be there !'

And the Stork lifted the little girl, flew to the wooden house, picked a hole with his beak in the bladder-covered window, laid the child on the bosom of the Viking's wife, and then hurried up to the Stork-mamma, and told her what he had seen and done ; and the little Storks listened to the story, for they were big enough to do so now.

'So you see,' he concluded, 'the Princess is not dead, for she must have sent the little one up here ; and now that is provided for too.'

'Ah, I said it would be so from the very beginning !' said the Stork-mamma ; 'but now think a little of your own family. Our travelling time is drawing on ; sometimes I feel quite restless in my wings already. The cuckoo and the nightingale have started, and I heard the quails saying that they were going too, as soon as the wind was favourable. Our young ones will behave well at the exercising, or I am much deceived in them.'

The Viking's wife was extremely glad when she woke next morning and found the charming infant lying in her arms. She kissed and caressed it, but it cried violently, and struggled with its arms and legs, and did not seem rejoiced at all. At length it cried itself to sleep, and as it lay there it looked exceedingly beautiful. The Viking's wife was in high glee : she felt light in body and soul ; her heart leapt within her ; and it seemed to her as if her husband and his warriors, who were absent, must return quite as suddenly and unexpectedly as the little one had come.

Therefore she and the whole household had enough to do in preparing everything for the reception of her lord. The long coloured curtains of tapestry, which she and her maids had worked, and on which they had woven pictures of their idols, Odin, Thor, and Freia, were hung up ; the slaves polished the old shields that served as ornaments ; and cushions were placed on the benches, and dry wood laid on the fireplace in the midst of the hall, so that the

fire could be lighted at a moment's notice. The Viking's wife herself assisted in the work, so that towards evening she was very tired, and slept well.

When she awoke towards morning, she was violently alarmed, for the infant had vanished ! She sprang from her couch, lighted a pine torch, and searched all round about ; and, behold, in the part of the bed where she had stretched her feet, lay, not the child, but a great ugly frog ! She was horror-struck at the sight, and seized a heavy stick to kill the frog ; but the creature looked at her with such strange mournful eyes, that she was not able to strike the blow. Once more she looked round the room—the frog uttered a low, wailing croak, and she started, sprang from the couch, and ran to the window and opened it. At that moment the sun shone forth, and flung its beams through the window on the couch and on the great frog ; and suddenly it appeared as though the frog's great mouth contracted and became small and red, and its limbs moved and stretched and became beautifully symmetrical, and it was no longer an ugly frog which lay there, but her pretty child !

‘ What is this ? ’ she said. ‘ Have I had a bad dream ? Is it not my own lovely cherub lying there ? ’

And she kissed and hugged it ; but the child struggled and fought like a little wild cat.

Not on this day nor on the morrow did the Viking return, although he was on his way home ; but the wind was against him, for it blew towards the south, favourably for the storks. A good wind for one is a contrary wind for another.

When one or two more days and nights had gone, the Viking's wife clearly understood how the case was with her child, that a terrible power of sorcery was upon it. By day it was charming as an angel of light, though it had a wild, savage temper ; but at night it became an ugly frog, quiet and mournful, with sorrowful eyes. Here were two natures changing inwardly as well as outwardly with the sunlight. The reason of this was that by day the child had the form of its mother, but the disposition of its father ; while, on the contrary, at night the paternal descent became manifest in its bodily appearance, though the mind and

heart of the mother then became dominant in the child. Who might be able to loosen this charm that wicked sorcery had worked ?

The wife of the Viking lived in care and sorrow about it ; and yet her heart yearned towards the little creature, of whose condition she felt she should not dare tell her husband on his return, for he would probably, according to the custom which then prevailed, expose the child on the public highway, and let whoever listed take it away. The good Viking woman could not find it in her heart to allow this, and she therefore determined that the Viking should never see the child except by daylight.

One morning the wings of storks were heard rushing over the roof ; more than a hundred pairs of those birds had rested from their exercise during the previous night, and now they soared aloft, to travel southwards.

'All males here, and ready,' they cried ; 'and the wives and children too.'

'How light we feel !' screamed the young Storks in chorus : 'it seems to be creeping all over us, down into our very toes, as if we were filled with living frogs. Ah, how charming it is, travelling to foreign lands !'

'Mind you keep close to us during your flight,' said papa and mamma. 'Don't use your beaks too much, for that tires the chest.'

And the Storks flew away.

At the same time the sound of the trumpets rolled across the heath, for the Viking had landed with his warriors ; they were returning home, richly laden with spoil, from the Gallic coast, where the people, as in the land of the Britons, sang in their terror :

'Deliver us from the wild Northmen !'

And life and tumultuous joy came with them into the Viking's castle on the moorland. The great mead-tub was brought into the hall, the pile of wood was set ablaze, horses were killed, and a great feast was to begin. The officiating priest sprinkled the slaves with the warm blood ; the fire crackled, the smoke rolled along beneath the roof, soot dropped from the beams, but they were accustomed to that. Guests were invited, and received handsome gifts :

all feuds and all malice were forgotten. And the company drank deep, and threw the bones of the feast in each other's faces, and this was considered a sign of good humour. The bard, a kind of minstrel, who was also a warrior and had been on the expedition with the rest, sang them a song in which they heard all their warlike deeds praised, and everything remarkable was specially noticed. Every verse ended with the burden :

Goods and gold, friends and foes will die ; every man must one day die ;
But a famous name will never die !

And with that they beat upon their shields, and hammered the table with bones and knives.

The Viking's wife sat upon the crossbench in the open hall. She wore a silken dress and golden armlets, and great amber beads : she was in her costliest garb. And the bard mentioned her in his song, and sang of the rich treasure she had brought her rich husband. The latter was delighted with the beautiful child, which he had seen in the daytime in all its loveliness ; and the savage ways of the little creature pleased him especially. He declared that the girl might grow up to be a stately heroine, strong and determined as a man. She would not wink her eyes when a practised hand cut off her eyebrows with a sword by way of a jest.

The full mead-barrel was emptied, and a fresh one brought in, for these were people who liked to enjoy all things plentifully. The old proverb was indeed well known, which says, 'The cattle know when they should quit the pasture, but a foolish man knoweth not the measure of his own appetite.' Yes, they knew it well enough ; but one *knows* one thing, and one *does* another. They also knew that 'even the welcome guest becomes wearisome when he sitteth long in the house' ; but for all that they sat still, for pork and mead are good things ; and there was high carousing, and at night the bondmen slept among the warm ashes, and dipped their fingers in the fat grease and licked them. Those were glorious times !

Once more in the year the Viking sallied forth, though the storms of autumn already began to roar : he went with his warriors to the shores of Britain, for he declared

that was but an excursion across the water ; and his wife stayed at home with the little girl. And thus much is certain, that the foster-mother soon got to love the frog with its gentle eyes and its sorrowful sighs, almost better than the pretty child that bit and beat all around her.

The rough damp mist of autumn, which devours the leaves of the forest, had already descended upon thicket and heath. 'Birds featherless,' as they called the snow, flew in thick masses, and the winter was coming on fast. The sparrows took possession of the storks' nests, and talked about the absent proprietors according to their fashion ; but these—the Stork-pair, with all the young ones—what had become of them ?

The Storks were now in the land of Egypt, where the sun sent forth warm rays, as it does here on a fine midsummer day. Tamarinds and acacias bloomed in the country all around ; the crescent of Mohammed glittered from the cupolas of the temples, and on the slender towers sat many a stork-pair resting after the long journey. Great troops divided the nests, built close together on venerable pillars and in fallen temple arches of forgotten cities. The date-palm lifted up its screen as if it would be a sunshade ; the greyish-white pyramids stood like masses of shadow in the clear air of the far desert, where the ostrich ran his swift career, and the lion gazed with his great grave eyes at the marble Sphinx which lay half buried in the sand. The waters of the Nile had fallen, and the whole river bed was crowded with frogs ; and that was, for the Stork family, the finest spectacle in the country. The young Storks thought it was optical illusion, they found everything so glorious.

'Yes, it's delightful here ; and it's always like this in our warm country,' said the Stork-mamma.

And the young ones felt quite frisky on the strength of it.

'Is there anything more to be seen ?' they asked. 'Are we to go much farther into the country ?'

'There's nothing further to be seen,' answered Stork-mamma. 'Behind this delightful region there are only wild forests, whose branches are interlaced with one another, while prickly climbing plants close up the paths—only the

elephant can force a way for himself with his great feet ; and the snakes are too big and the lizards too quick for us. If you go into the desert, you'll get your eyes full of sand when there 's a light breeze, but when it blows great guns you may get into the middle of a pillar of sand. It is best to stay here, where there are frogs and locusts. I shall stay here, and you shall stay too.'

And there they remained. The parents sat in the nest on the slender minaret, and rested, and yet were busily employed smoothing their feathers, and whetting their beaks against their red stockings. Now and then they stretched out their necks, and bowed gravely, and lifted their heads, with their high foreheads and fine smooth feathers, and looked very clever with their brown eyes. The female young ones strutted about in the juicy reeds, looked slyly at the other young storks, made acquaintances, and swallowed a frog at every third step, or rolled a little snake to and fro in their bills, which they thought became them well, and, moreover, tasted nice. The male young ones began a quarrel, beat each other with their wings, struck with their beaks, and even pricked each other till the blood came. And in this way sometimes one couple was betrothed, and sometimes another, of the young ladies and gentlemen, and that was just what they lived for : then they took to a new nest, and began new quarrels, for in hot countries people are generally hot tempered and passionate. But it was pleasant for all that, and the old people especially were much rejoiced, for all that young people do seems to suit them well. There was sunshine every day, and every day plenty to eat, and nothing to think of but pleasure. But in the rich castle at the Egyptian host's, as they called him, there was no pleasure to be found.

The rich mighty lord reclined on his divan, in the midst of the great hall of the many-coloured walls, looking as if he were sitting in a tulip ; but he was stiff and powerless in all his limbs, and lay stretched out like a mummy. His family and servants surrounded him, for he was not dead, though one could not exactly say that he was alive. The healing moss flower from the North, which was to have been found and brought home by her who loved him best, never appeared. His beauteous young daughter, who had

flown in the swan's plumage over sea and land to the far North, was never to come back. 'She is dead!' the two returning Swan-maidens had said, and they had made up a complete story, which ran as follows:

'We three together flew high in the air: a hunter saw us, and shot his arrow at us; it struck our young companion and friend, and slowly, singing her farewell song, she sank down, a dying swan, into the woodland lake. By the shore of the lake, under a weeping birch tree, we buried her. But we had our revenge. We bound fire under the wings of the swallow who had her nest beneath the huntsman's thatch; the house burst into flames, the huntsman was burned in the house, and the glare shone over the sea as far as the hanging birch beneath which she sleeps. Never will she return to the land of Egypt.'

And then the two wept. And when Stork-papa heard the story, he clapped with his beak so that it could be heard a long way off.

'Falsehood and lies!' he cried. 'I should like to run my beak deep into their chests.'

'And perhaps break it off,' interposed the Stork-mamma: 'and then you would look well. Think first of yourself, and then of your family, and all the rest does not concern you.'

'But to-morrow I shall seat myself at the edge of the open cupola, when the wise and learned men assemble to consult on the sick man's state: perhaps they may come a little nearer the truth.'

And the learned and wise men came together and spoke a great deal, out of which the Stork could make no sense—and it had no result, either for the sick man or for the daughter in the swampy waste. But for all that we may listen to what the people said, for we have to listen to a great deal of talk in the world.

But then it will be an advantage to hear what went before, and in this case we are well informed for we know just as much about it as Stork-papa.

'Love gives life! the highest love gives the highest life! Only through love can his life be preserved.'

That is what they all said, and the learned men said it was very cleverly and beautifully spoken.

‘That is a beautiful thought!’ Stork-papa said immediately.

‘I don’t quite understand it,’ Stork-mamma replied; ‘and that’s not my fault, but the fault of the thought. But let it be as it will, I’ve something else to think of.’

And now the learned men had spoken of the love to this one and that one, and of the difference between the love of one’s neighbour and love between parents and children, of the love of plants for the light, when the sunbeam kisses the ground and the germ springs forth from it,—everything was so fully and elaborately explained that it was quite impossible for Stork-papa to take it in, much less to repeat it. He felt quite weighed down with thought, and half shut his eyes, and the whole of the following day he stood thoughtfully upon one leg: it was quite heavy for him to carry, all that learning.

But one thing Stork-papa understood. All, high and low, had spoken out of their inmost hearts, and said that it was a great misfortune for thousands of people, yes, for the whole country, that this man was lying sick, and could not get well, and that it would spread joy and pleasure abroad if he should recover. But where grew the flower that could restore him to health? They had all searched for it, consulted learned books, the twinkling stars, the weather and the wind; they had made inquiries in every by-way of which they could think; and at length the wise men and the learned men had said, as we have already told, that ‘Love begets life—will restore a father’s life’; and on this occasion they said more than they understood. They repeated it, and wrote down as a recipe, ‘Love begets life.’ But how was the thing to be prepared according to the recipe? that was a difficulty they could not get over. At last they were decided upon the point that help must come by means of the Princess, who loved her father with her whole soul; and at last a method had been devised whereby help could be procured. Yes, it was already more than a year ago since the Princess was to go forth by night, when the brief rays of the new moon were waning: she was to go out to the marble Sphinx, to shake the dust from her sandals, and to go onward through the long passage which leads into the midst of one of the great

pyramids, where one of the mighty Kings of antiquity, surrounded by pomp and treasure, lay swathed in mummy cloths. There she was to incline her ear to the dead King, and then it would be revealed to her where she might find life and health for her father. She had fulfilled all this, and had seen in a vision that she was to bring home from the deep moss up in the Danish land—the very place had been accurately described to her—the lotos flower which grows in the depths of the waters, and then her father would regain health and strength.

And therefore she had gone forth in the swan's plumage out of the land of Egypt up to the wild moss. And the Stork-papa and Stork-mamma knew all this ; and now we also know it more accurately than we knew it before. We know that the Marsh King had drawn her down to himself, and know that to those at home she is dead for ever. Only the wisest of them said, as the Stork-mamma said too, 'She will manage to help herself ;' and they resolved to wait and see what would happen, for they knew of nothing better that they could do.

'I should like to take away the swans' feathers from the two faithless Princesses,' said the Stork-papa ; 'then at any rate, they will not be able to fly up again to the wild moss and do mischief. I'll hide the two swan-feather suits up there, till somebody has occasion for them.'

'But where do you intend to hide them ?' asked Stork-mamma.

'Up in our nest in the moss,' answered he. 'I and our young ones will take turns in carrying them up yonder on our return, and if that should prove too difficult for us, there are places enough on the way where we can conceal them till our next journey. Certainly, one suit of swan's feathers would be enough for the Princess, but two are always better. In those northern countries no one can have too many wraps.'

'No one will thank you for it,' quoth 'Stork-mamma ; 'but you're the master. Except at breeding-time, I have nothing to say.'

In the Viking's castle by the wild moss, whither the Storks bent their flight when the spring approached, they

had given the little girl the name of Helga ; but this name was too soft for a temper like that which went with her beauteous form. Month by month this temper showed itself more and more ; and in the course of years—during which the Storks made the same journey over and over again, in autumn to the Nile, in spring back to the moorland lake—the child grew to be a big girl ; and before people were aware of it, she was a beautiful maiden in her sixteenth year. The shell was splendid, but the kernel was harsh and hard ; harder even than most in those dark, gloomy times. It was a pleasure to her to splash about with her white hands in the blood of the horse that had been slain in sacrifice. In her wild mood she bit off the neck of the black cock the priest was about to offer up ; and to her foster-father she said in perfect seriousness,

‘ If thy enemy should pull down the roof of thy house, while thou wert sleeping, I would not wake thee even if I had the power. I should never hear it, for my ears still tingle with the blow that thou gavest me years ago—thou ! I have never forgotten it.’

But the Viking took her words in jest ; for, like all others, he was bewitched with her beauty, and he knew not how temper and form changed in Helga. Without a saddle she sat upon a horse, as if she were part of it, while it rushed along in full career ; nor would she spring from the horse when it quarrelled and fought with other horses. Often she would throw herself, in her clothes, from the high shore into the sea, and swim to meet the Viking when his boat steered near home ; and she cut her longest lock of hair, and twisted it into a string for her bow.

‘ Self-made is well-made,’ she said.

The Viking’s wife was strong of character and of will, according to the custom of the times ; but, compared to her daughter, she appeared as a feeble, timid woman ; moreover, she knew that an evil charm weighed heavily upon the unfortunate child.

It seemed as if, out of mere malice, when her mother stood on the threshold or came out into the yard, Helga would often seat herself on the margin of the well, and wave her arms in the air ; then suddenly she would dive into the deep well, where her frog nature enabled her to

dive and rise, down and up, until she climbed forth again like a cat, and came back into the hall dripping with water, so that the green leaves strewn upon the ground turned about in the stream.

But there was one thing that imposed a check upon Helga, and that was the evening twilight. When that came she was quiet and thoughtful, and would listen to reproof and advice; and then a secret feeling seemed to draw her towards her mother. And when the sun sank, and the usual transformation of body and spirit took place in her, she would sit quiet and mournful, shrunk to the shape of the frog, her body indeed much larger than that of the animal, and for that reason much more hideous to behold, for she looked like a wretched dwarf with a frog's head and webbed fingers. Her eyes then had a very melancholy expression. She had no voice, and could only utter a hollow croaking that sounded like the stifled sob of a dreaming child. Then the Viking's wife took her on her lap, and forgot the ugly form as she looked into the mournful eyes, and said,

'I could almost wish that thou wert always my poor dumb frog-child; for thou art only the more terrible to look at when thy beauty is on the outside.'

And she wrote Runes against sorcery and sickness, and threw them over the wretched child; but she could not see that they worked any good.

'One can scarcely believe that she was ever so small that she could lie in the cup of a water-lily,' said Stork-papa, 'now she's grown up the image of her Egyptian mother. *Her* we shall never see again! She did not know how to help herself, as you and the learned physicians said. Year after year I have flown to and fro, across and across the great moss, and she has never once given a sign that she was still alive. Yes, I may as well tell you, that every year, when I came here a few days before you, to repair the nest and attend to various matters, I spent a whole night in flying to and fro over the lake, as if I had been an owl or a bat, but every time in vain. The two suits of swan feathers which I and the young ones dragged up here out of the land of the Nile have consequently not been used: we had trouble enough with them to bring

them hither in three journeys ; and now they have lain for many years at the bottom of the nest, and if it should happen that a fire broke out, and the wooden house were burned, they would be destroyed.'

'And our good nest would be destroyed too,' said Stork-mamma ; 'but you think less of that than of your plumage stuff and of your Moor Princess. You'd best go down into the mud and stay there with her. You're a bad father to your own children, as I told you when I hatched our first brood. I only hope neither we nor our children will get an arrow in our wings through that wild girl. Helga doesn't know in the least what she does. I wish she would only remember that we have lived here longer than she, and that we have never forgotten our duty, and have given our toll every year, a feather, an egg, and a young one, as it was right we should do. Do you think I can now wander about in the courtyard and everywhere, as I used to in former days, and as I still do in Egypt, where I am almost the playfellow of the people, and that I can press into pot and kettle as I can yonder ? No, I sit up here and am angry at her, the stupid chit ! And I am angry at you too. You should have just left her lying in the water-lily, and she would have been dead long ago.'

'You are much better than your words,' said Stork-papa. 'I know you better than you know yourself.'

And with that he gave a hop, and flapped his wings heavily twice, stretched out his legs behind him, and flew away, or rather sailed away, without moving his wings. He had already gone some distance when he gave a great *flap* ! The sun shone upon the white feathers, and his head and neck were stretched forth proudly. There was power in it, and dash !

'After all, he's handsomer than any of them,' said Stork-mamma to herself ; 'but I don't tell him so.'

Early in that autumn the Viking came home, laden with booty, and bringing prisoners with him. Among these was a young Christian priest, one of those who contemned the gods of the North.

Often in those later times there had been a talk, in hall

and chamber, of the new faith that was spreading far and wide in the South, and which, by means of Saint Ansgar, had penetrated as far as Hedeby on the Slie. Even Helga had heard of this belief in the White Christ who, from love to men and for their redemption, had sacrificed His life ; but with her all this had, as the saying is, gone in at one ear and come out at the other. It seemed as if she only understood the meaning of the word 'love' when she crouched in a corner of the chamber in the form of a miserable frog ; but the Viking's wife had listened, and had felt strangely moved by the stories and tales which were told in the South about the one only true Word.

On their return from their last voyage, the men told of the splendid temples built of hewn stones, raised for the worship of Him whose message is love. Some massive vessels of gold, made with cunning art, had been brought home among the booty, and each one had a peculiar fragrance ; for they were incense vessels, which had been swung by Christian priests before the altar.

In the deep cellars of the Viking's house the young priest had been immured, his hands and feet bound with strips of bark. The Viking's wife declared that he was beautiful as Balder to behold, and his misfortune touched her heart ; but Helga declared that it would be right to tie ropes to his heels and fasten him to the tails of wild oxen. And she exclaimed,

'Then I would let loose the dogs—hurrah ! over the moor and across the swamp ! That would be a spectacle ! And yet finer would it be to follow him in his career.'

But the Viking would not suffer him to die such a death : he purposed to sacrifice the priest on the morrow, on the death-stone in the grove, as a despiser and foe of the high gods.

For the first time a man was to be sacrificed here.

Helga begged, as a boon, that she might sprinkle the image of the god and the assembled multitude with the blood of the victim. She sharpened her glittering knife, and when one of the great savage dogs, of whom a number were running about near the Viking's abode, ran by her, she thrust the knife into his side, 'merely to try its sharpness,' as she said. And the Viking's wife looked mourn-

fully at the wild, evil-disposed girl ; and when night came on and the maiden exchanged beauty of form for gentleness of soul, she spoke in eloquent words to Helga of the sorrow that was deep in her heart.

The ugly frog, in its monstrous form, stood before her, and fixed its brown eyes upon her face, listening to her words, and seeming to comprehend them with human intelligence.

‘Never, not even to my husband, have I allowed my lips to utter a word concerning the sufferings I have to undergo through thee,’ said the Viking’s wife ; ‘my heart is full of more compassion for thee than I myself believed : great is the love of a mother ! But love never entered into thy heart—thy heart that is like the wet, cold moorland plants. From whence have you come into my house ?’

Then the miserable form trembled, and it was as though these words touched an invisible bond between body and soul, and great tears came into her eyes.

‘Thy hard time will come,’ said the Viking’s wife ; ‘and it will be terrible to me too. It had been better if thou hadst been set out by the high road, and the night wind had lulled thee to sleep.’

And the Viking’s wife wept bitter tears, and went away full of wrath and bitterness of spirit, disappearing behind the curtain of furs that hung over the beam and divided the hall.

The wrinkled frog crouched in the corner alone. A deep silence reigned all around, but at intervals a half-stifled sigh escaped from its breast, from the breast of Helga. It seemed as though a painful new life were arising in her inmost heart. She came forward and listened ; and, stepping forward again, grasped with her clumsy hands the heavy pole that was laid across before the door. Silently she pushed back the pole, silently drew back the bolt, and took up the flickering lamp which stood in the ante-chamber of the hall. It seemed as if a strong will gave her strength. She drew back the iron bolt from the closed cellar door, and crept in to the captive. He was asleep ; she touched him with her cold, clammy hand, and when he awoke and saw the hideous form, he shuddered as though he had beheld a wicked apparition. She drew her knife, cut his bonds, and beckoned him to follow her.

He uttered some holy names and made the sign of the cross ; and when the form remained unchanged, he said, ' Who art thou ? Whence this animal shape that thou bearest, while yet thou art full of gentle mercy ? '

The frog-woman beckoned him to follow, and led him through passages shrouded with curtains, into the stables, and there pointed to a horse. He mounted on its back, and she also sprang up before him, holding fast by the horse's mane. The prisoner understood her meaning, and in a rapid trot they rode on a way which he would never have found, out on to the open heath.

He thought not of her hideous form, but felt how the mercy and loving-kindness of the Almighty were working by means of this monster apparition ; he prayed pious prayers and sang songs of praise. Then she trembled. Was it the power of song and of prayer that worked in her, or was she shuddering at the cold morning twilight that was approaching ? What were her feelings ? She raised herself up, and wanted to stop the horse and to alight ; but the Christian priest held her back with all his strength, and sang a psalm, as if that would have the power to loosen the charm that turned her into the hideous semblance of a frog. And the horse galloped on more wildly than ever ; the sky turned red, the first sunbeam pierced through the clouds, and as the flood of light came streaming down, the frog changed its nature. Helga was again the beautiful maiden with the wicked, demoniac spirit. He held a beautiful maiden in his arms, but was horrified at the sight : he swung himself from the horse, and compelled it to stand. This seemed to him a new and terrible sorcery ; but Helga likewise leaped from the saddle, and stood on the ground. The child's short garment reached only to her knee. She plucked the sharp knife from her girdle, and rushed in upon the astonished priest.

' Let me get at thee ! ' she screamed ; ' let me get at thee, and plunge this knife in thy body ! Thou art pale as straw, thou beardless slave ! '

She pressed in upon him. They struggled together in a hard strife, but an invisible power seemed given to the Christian captive. He held her fast ; and the old oak tree beneath which they stood came to his assistance ; for its

roots, which projected over the ground, held fast the maiden's feet that had become entangled in it. Quite close to them gushed a spring ; and he sprinkled Helga's face and neck with the fresh water, and commanded the unclean spirit to come forth, and blessed her in the Christian fashion ; but the water of faith has no power when the well-spring of faith flows not from within.

And yet the Christian showed his power even now, and opposed more than the mere might of a man against the evil that struggled within the girl. His holy action seemed to overpower her : she dropped her hands, and gazed with astonished eyes and pale cheeks upon him who appeared to her a mighty magician learned in secret arts ; he seemed to her to speak in a dark Runic tongue, and to be making magic signs in the air. She would not have winked had he swung a sharp knife or a glittering axe against her ; but she trembled when he signed her with the sign of the cross on her brow and her bosom, and she sat there like a tame bird with bowed head

Then he spoke to her in gentle words of the kindly deed she had done for him in the past night, when she came to him in the form of the hideous frog, to loosen his bonds and to lead him out to life and light ; and he told her that she too was bound in closer bonds than those that had confined him, and that she should be released by his means. He would take her to Hedeby, to the holy Ansgar, and there in the Christian city the spell that bound her would be loosed. But he would not let her sit before him on the horse, though of her own accord she offered to do so.

'Thou must sit behind me, not before me,' he said. 'Thy magic beauty hath a power that comes of evil, and I fear it ; and yet I feel that the victory is sure to him who hath faith.'

And he knelt down and prayed fervently. It seemed as though the woodland scenes were consecrated as a holy church by his prayer. The birds sang as though they belonged to the new congregation, the wild flowers smelt sweet as incense ; and while he spoke the horse that had carried them both in headlong career stood still before the tall bramble bushes, and plucked at them, so that the ripe

juicy berries fell down upon Helga's hands, offering themselves for her refreshment.

Patiently she suffered the priest to lift her on the horse, and sat like a somnambulist, neither completely asleep nor wholly awake. The Christian bound two branches together with bark, in the form of a cross, which he held up high as they rode through the forest. The wood became thicker as they went on, and at last became a trackless wilderness.

The wild sloe grew across the way, so that they had to ride round the bushes. The spring became not a stream but a standing marsh, round which likewise they were obliged to ride. There was strength and refreshment in the cool forest breeze ; and no small power lay in the gentle words which were spoken in faith and in Christian love, from a strong inward yearning to lead the poor lost one into the way of light and life.

They say the rain-drops can hollow the hard stone, and the waves of the sea can smooth and round the sharp edges of the rocks. Thus did the dew of mercy, that dropped upon Helga, smooth what was rough and penetrate what was hard in her. The effects did not yet appear, nor was she aware of them herself ; but doth the seed in the bosom of earth know, when the refreshing dew and the quickening sunbeams fall upon it, that it hath within itself the power of growth and blossoming ? As the song of the mother penetrates into the heart of the child, and it babbles the words after her, without understanding their import, until they afterwards engender thought, and come forward in due time clearer and more clearly, so here also did the Word take effect, that is powerful to create.

They rode forth from the dense forest, across the heath, and then again through pathless woods ; and towards evening they encountered a band of robbers.

' Where hast thou stolen that beauteous maiden ? ' cried the robbers ; and they seized the horse's bridle and dragged the two riders from its back. The priest had no weapon save the knife he had taken from Helga, and with this he tried to defend himself. One of the robbers lifted his axe, but the young priest sprang aside, otherwise he would have been struck, and now the edge of the axe went deep into the horse's neck, so that the blood spurted forth, and

the creature sank down on the ground. Then Helga seemed suddenly to wake up from her long reverie, and threw herself hastily upon the gasping animal. The priest stood before her to protect and defend her, but one of the robbers swung his iron hammer over the Christian's head, and brought it down with such a crash that blood and brains were scattered around, and the priest sank to the earth, dead.

Then the robbers seized little Helga by her white arms ; but the sun went down, and its last ray disappeared at that moment, and she was changed into the form of a frog. A white-green mouth spread over half her face, her arms became thin and slimy, and broad hands with webbed fingers spread out upon them like fans. Then the robbers were seized with terror, and let her go. She stood, a hideous monster, among them ; and as it is the nature of the frog to do, she hopped up high, and disappeared in the thicket. Then the robbers saw that this must be a bad prank of the spirit Loke, or the evil power of magic, and in great affright they hurried away from the spot.

The full moon was already rising. Presently it shone with splendid radiance over the earth, and poor Helga crept forth from the thicket in the wretched frog's shape. She stood still beside the corpse of the priest and the carcass of the slain horse. She looked at them with eyes that appeared to weep, and from the frog-mouth came forth a croaking like the voice of a child bursting into tears. She leaned first over the one, then over the other, brought water in her hand, which had become larger and more hollow by the webbed skin, and poured it over them ; but dead they were, and dead they would remain, she at last understood. Soon the wild beasts would come and tear their dead bodies ; but no, that must not be ! so she dug up the earth as well as she could, in the endeavour to prepare a grave for them. She had nothing to work with but a stake and her two hands encumbered with the webbed skin that grew between the fingers, and which was torn by the labour, so that the blood flowed. At last she saw that her endeavours would not succeed. Then she brought water and washed the dead man's face, and covered it with fresh green leaves ; she brought large boughs and laid

them upon him, scattering dead leaves in the spaces between. Then she brought the heaviest stones she could carry and laid them over the dead body, stopping up the openings with moss. And now she thought the grave-hill would be strong and secure. The night had passed away in this difficult work—the sun broke through the clouds, and beautiful Helga stood there in all her loveliness, with bleeding hands, and for the first time with tears on her blushing maiden cheeks.

Then in this transformation it seemed as if two natures were striving within her. Her whole frame trembled, and she looked around, as if she had just awoke from a troubled dream. Then she ran towards the slender tree, clung to it for support, and in another moment she had climbed to the summit of the tree, and held fast. There she sat like a startled squirrel, and remained the whole day long in the silent solitude of the wood, where everything is quiet, and, as they say, dead. Butterflies fluttered around in sport, and in the neighbourhood were several ant-hills, each with its hundreds of busy little occupants moving briskly to and fro. In the air danced innumerable gnats, swarm upon swarm, and hosts of buzzing flies, ladybirds, gold beetles, and other little winged creatures ; the worm crept forth from the damp ground, the moles came out ; but except these all was silent around—silent, and, as people say, dead. No one noticed Helga, but some flocks of jays, that flew screaming about the top of the tree on which she sat : the birds hopped close up to her on the twigs with pert curiosity ; but when the glance of her eye fell upon them, it was a signal for their flight. But they could not understand her—nor, indeed, could she understand herself.

When the evening twilight came on, and the sun was sinking, the time of her transformation roused her to fresh activity. She glided down from the tree, and as the last sunbeam vanished she stood in the wrinkled form of the frog, with the torn webbed skin on her hands ; but her eyes now gleamed with a splendour of beauty that had scarcely been theirs when she wore her garb of loveliness, for they were a pair of pure, pious, maidenly eyes that shone out of the frog-face. They bore witness of depth

of feeling, of the gentle human heart ; and the beauteous eyes overflowed in tears, weeping precious drops that lightened the heart.

On the sepulchral mound she had raised there yet lay the cross of boughs, the last work of him who slept beneath. Helga lifted up the cross, in pursuance of a sudden thought that came upon her. She planted it between the stones, over the priest and the dead horse. The sorrowful remembrance of him called fresh tears into her eyes ; and in this tender frame of mind she marked the same sign in the earth around the grave ; and as she wrote the sign with both her hands, the webbed skin fell from them like a torn glove ; and when she washed her hands in the woodland spring, and gazed in wonder at her fine white hands, she again made the holy sign in the air between herself and the dead man ; then her lips trembled, the holy name that had been preached to her during the ride from the forest came to her mouth, and she pronounced it audibly.

Then the frog-skin fell from her, and she was once more the beauteous maiden. But her head sank wearily, her tired limbs required rest, and she slept.

Her sleep, however, was short. Towards midnight she awoke. Before her stood the dead horse, beaming and full of life, which gleamed forth from his eyes and from his wounded neck ; close beside the creature stood the murdered Christian priest, ' more beautiful than Balder,' the Viking woman would have said ; and yet he seemed to stand in a flame of fire.

Such gravity, such an air of justice, such a piercing look shone out of his great mild eyes, that their glance seemed to penetrate every corner of her heart. Little Helga trembled at the look, and her remembrance awoke as though she stood before the tribunal of judgement. Every good deed that had been done for her, every loving word that had been spoken, seemed endowed with life : she understood that it had been love that kept her here during the days of trial, during which the creature formed of dust and spirit, soul and earth, combats and struggles ; she acknowledged that she had only followed the leading of temper, and had done nothing for herself ; everything had been given her, everything had been guided by Providence.

She bowed herself humbly, confessing her own deep imperfection in the presence of the Power that can read every thought of the heart—and then the priest spoke.

‘Thou daughter of the moss,’ he said, ‘out of the earth, out of the moor, thou camest; but from the earth thou shalt arise. The sunbeam in you, which comes not from the sun, but from God, will go back to its origin, conscious of the body it has inhabited. No soul shall be lost, but time is long; it is the course of life through eternity. I come from the land of the dead. Thou, too, shalt pass through the deep valleys into the beaming mountain region, where dwell mercy and completeness. I cannot lead thee to Hedeby, to receive Christian baptism; for, first, thou must burst the veil of waters over the deep moss, and draw forth the living source of thy being and of thy birth; thou must exercise thy faculties in deeds before the consecration can be given thee.’

And he lifted her upon the horse, and gave her a golden censer similar to the one she had seen in the Viking’s castle. The open wound in the forehead of the slain Christian shone like a diadem. He took the cross from the grave and held it aloft. And now they rode through the air, over the rustling wood, over the mounds where the old heroes lay buried, each on his dead war-horse; and the mighty figures rose up and galloped forth, and stationed themselves on the summits of the mounds. The golden hoop on the forehead of each gleamed in the moonlight and their mantles floated in the night breeze. The dragon that guards buried treasures likewise lifted up his head and gazed after the riders. The gnomes and wood spirits peeped forth from beneath the hills and from between the furrows of the fields, and flitted to and fro with red, blue, and green torches, like the sparks in the ashes of a burned paper.

Over woodland and heath, over river and marsh they fled away, up to the wild moss; and over this they hovered in wide circles. The Christian priest held the cross aloft: it gleamed like gold; and from his lips dropped pious prayers. Beautiful Helga joined in the hymns he sang, like a child joining in its mother’s song. She swung the censer, and a wondrous fragrance of incense streamed forth

thence, so that the reeds and grass of the moss burst forth into blossom. Every germ came forth from the deep ground. All that had life lifted itself up. A veil of water-lilies spread itself forth like a carpet of wrought flowers, and upon this carpet lay a sleeping woman, young and beautiful. Helga thought it was her own likeness she saw upon the mirror of the calm waters. But it was her mother whom she beheld, the Marsh King's wife, the Princess from the banks of the Nile.

The dead priest commanded that the slumbering woman should be lifted upon the horse ; but the horse sank under the burden, as though its body had been a cloth fluttering in the wind. But the holy sign gave strength to the airy phantom, and then the three rode from the moss to the firm land.

Then the cock crowed in the Viking's castle, and the phantom shapes dissolved and floated away in air ; but mother and daughter stood opposite each other.

'Is it myself that I see in the deep waters ?' asked the mother.

'Is it myself that I see reflected on the clear mirror ?' exclaimed the daughter.

And they approached one another and embraced. The heart of the mother beat quickest, and she understood it.

'My child ! thou flower of my own heart ! my lotos flower of the deep waters !'

And she embraced her child anew, and wept ; and the tears were as a new baptism of life and love to Helga.

'In the swan's plumage came I hither,' said the mother, 'and threw it off. I sank through the shaking mud, far down into the black slime, which closed like a wall around me. But soon I felt a fresher stream ; a power drew me down, deeper and ever deeper. I felt the weight of sleep upon my eyelids ; I slumbered, and dreams hovered round me. It seemed to me that I was again in the pyramid in Egypt, and yet the waving alder trunk that had frightened me up in the moss was ever before me. I looked at the clefts and wrinkles in the stem, and they shone forth in colours and took the form of hieroglyphics : it was the case of the mummy at which I was gazing ; the case burst, and forth stepped the thousand-year old King, the

mummied form, black as pitch, shining black as the wood snail or the fat mud of the swamp : whether it was the Marsh King or the mummy of the pyramids I knew not. He seized me in his arms, and I felt as if I must die. When I returned to consciousness a little bird was sitting on my bosom, beating with its wings, and twittering and singing. The bird flew away from me up towards the heavy, dark covering, but a long green band still fastened him to me. I heard and understood his longing tones : " Freedom ! Sunlight ! To my father ! " Then I thought of my father and the sunny land of my birth, my life, and my love ; and I loosened the band and let the bird soar away home to the father. Since that hour I have dreamed no more. I have slept a sleep, a long and heavy sleep, till in this hour harmony and incense awoke me and set me free.'

The green band from the heart of the mother to the bird's wings, where did it flutter now ? whither had it been wafted ? Only the Stork had seen it. The band was the green stalk, the bow at the end, the beauteous flower, the cradle of the child that had now bloomed into beauty and was once more resting on its mother's heart.

And while the two were locked in each other's embrace, the old Stork flew around them in circles, and at length shot away towards his nest, whence he brought out the swan-feather suits he had preserved there for years, throwing one to each of them, and the feathers closed around them, so that they soared up from the earth in the semblance of two white swans.

' And now we will speak with one another,' quoth Stork-papa, ' now we understand each other, though the beak of one bird is differently shaped from that of another. It happens more than fortunately that you came to-night. To-morrow we should have been gone—mother, myself, and the young ones, for we are flying southward. Yes, only look at me ! I am an old friend from the land of the Nile, and mother has a heart larger than her beak. She always declared the Princess would find a way to help herself ; and I and the young ones carried the swans' feathers up here. But how glad I am ! and how fortunate that I'm here still ! At dawn of day we shall move hence, a great company of storks. We'll fly first, and do you

follow us ; thus you cannot miss your way ; moreover, I and the youngsters will keep a sharp eye upon you.'

'And the lotos flower which I was to bring with me,' said the Egyptian Princess, 'she is flying by my side in the swans' plumage ! I bring with me the flower of my heart ; and thus the riddle has been read. Homeward ! homeward !'

But Helga declared she could not quit the Danish land before she had once more seen her foster-mother, the affectionate Viking woman. Every beautiful recollection, every kind word, every tear that her foster-mother had wept for her, rose up in her memory, and in that moment she almost felt as if she loved the Viking woman best of all.

'Yes, we must go to the Viking's castle,' said Stork-papa ; 'mother and the youngsters are waiting for us there. How they will turn up their eyes and flap their wings ! Yes, you see, mother doesn't speak much—she's short and dry, but she means all the better. I'll begin clapping at once, that they may know we're coming.'

And Stork-papa clapped in first-rate style, and they all flew away towards the Viking's castle.

In the castle every one was sunk in deep sleep. The Viking's wife had not retired to rest until it was late. She was anxious about Helga, who had vanished with the Christian priest three days before : she must have assisted him in his flight, for it was the girl's horse that had been missed from the stables ; but how all this had been effected was a mystery to her. The Viking woman had heard of the miracles told of the White Christ, and by those who believed in His words and followed Him. Her passing thoughts formed themselves into a dream, and it seemed to her that she was still lying awake on her couch, and that deep darkness reigned without. The storm drew near : she heard the sea roaring and rolling to the east and to the west, like the waves of the North Sea and the Cattegat. The immense snake which was believed to surround the span of the earth in the depths of the ocean was trembling in convulsions ; she dreamed that the night of the fall of the gods had come—Ragnarok, as the heathen called the last day, when everything was to pass away, even the great gods themselves. The war-trumpet sounded, and

the gods rode over the rainbow, clad in steel, to fight the last battle. The winged Valkyries rode before them, and the dead warriors closed the train. The whole firmament was ablaze with Northern Lights, and yet the darkness seemed to predominate. It was a terrible hour.

And, close by the terrified Viking woman, Helga seemed to be crouching on the floor in the hideous frog-form, trembling and pressing close to her foster-mother, who took her on her lap and embraced her affectionately, hideous though she was. The air resounded with the blows of clubs and swords, and with the hissing of arrows, as if a hail-storm were passing across it. The hour was come when earth and sky were to burst, the stars to fall, and all things to be swallowed up in Surt's sea of fire ; but she knew that there would be a new heaven and a new earth, that the cornfields then would wave where now the ocean rolled over the desolate tracts of sand, and that the unutterable God would reign ; and up to Him rose Balder the gentle, the affectionate, delivered from the kingdom of the dead : he came ; the Viking woman saw him and recognized his countenance ; it was that of the captive Christian priest. ' White Christ ! ' she cried aloud, and with these words she pressed a kiss upon the forehead of the hideous frog-child. Then the frog-skin fell off, and Helga stood revealed in all her beauty, lovely and gentle as she had never appeared, and with beaming eyes. She kissed her foster-mother's hands, blessed her for all the care and affection lavished during the days of bitterness and trial, for the thought she had awakened and cherished in her, for naming the name, which she repeated, ' White Christ ; ' and beauteous Helga arose in the form of a mighty swan, and spread her white wings with a rushing like the sound of a troop of birds of passage winging their way through the air.

The Viking woman awoke, and she heard the same noise without still continuing. She knew it was the time for the storks to depart, and that it must be those birds whose wings she heard. She wished to see them once more, and to bid them farewell as they set forth on their journey. Therefore she rose from her couch and stepped out upon the threshold, and on the top of the gable she saw stork

ranged behind stork, and around the castle, over the high trees, flew bands of storks wheeling in wide circles ; but opposite her, by the well where Helga had often sat and alarmed her with her wildness, sat two white swans gazing at her with intelligent eyes. And she remembered her dream, which still filled her soul as if it were reality. She thought of Helga in the shape of a swan, and of the Christian priest ; and suddenly she felt her heart rejoice within her.

The swans flapped their wings and arched their necks, as if they would send her a greeting, and the Viking's wife spread out her arms towards them, as if she understood it, and smiled through her tears, and then stood sunk in deep thought.

Then all the storks arose, flapping their wings and clapping with their beaks, to start on their voyage towards the South.

'We will not wait for the swans,' said Stork-mamma : 'if they want to go with us they had better come. We can't sit here till the plovers start. It is a fine thing, after all, to travel in this way, in families, not like the finches and partridges, where the male and female birds fly in separate bodies, which appears to me a very unbecoming thing. What are yonder swans flapping their wings for ?'

'Every one flies in his own fashion,' said Stork-papa : 'the swans in an oblique line, the cranes in a triangle, and the plovers in a snake's line.'

'Don't talk about snakes while we are flying up here,' said Stork-mamma. 'It only puts ideas into the children's heads which can't be gratified.'

'Are those the high mountains of which I have heard tell ?' asked Helga, in the swan's plumage.

'They are storm clouds driving on beneath us,' replied her mother.

'What are yonder white clouds that rise so high ?' asked Helga again.

'Those are the mountains covered with perpetual snow which you see yonder,' replied her mother.

And they flew across the lofty Alps towards the blue Mediterranean.

'Africa's land ! Egypt's strand !' sang, rejoicingly, in

her swan's plumage, the daughter of the Nile, as from the lofty air she saw her native land in the form of a yellowish wavy stripe of shore.

And all the birds caught sight of it, and hastened their flight.

'I can scent the Nile mud and wet frogs,' said Stork-mamma; 'I begin to feel quite hungry. Yes; now you shall taste something nice; and you will see the marabou bird, the crane, and the ibis. They all belong to our family, though they are not nearly so beautiful as we. They give themselves great airs, especially the ibis. He has been quite spoiled by the Egyptians, for they make a mummy of him and stuff him with spices. I would rather be stuffed with live frogs, and so would you, and so you shall. Better have something in one's inside while one is alive than to be made a fuss of after one is dead. That's my opinion, and I am always right.'

'Now the storks are come,' said the people in the rich house on the banks of the Nile, where the royal lord lay in the open hall on the downy cushions, covered with a leopard-skin, not alive and yet not dead, but waiting and hoping for the lotos flower from the deep moss in the far North. Friends and servants stood around his couch.

And into the hall flew two beauteous swans. They had come with the storks. They threw off their dazzling white plumage, and two lovely female forms were revealed, as like each other as two dew-drops. They bent over the old, pale, sick man, they put back their long hair, and while Helga bent over her grandfather, his white cheeks reddened, his eyes brightened, and life came back to his wasted limbs. The old man rose up cheerful and well, and daughter and granddaughter embraced him joyfully, as if they were giving him a morning greeting after a long heavy dream.

And joy reigned through the whole house, and likewise in the Stork's nest, though there the chief cause was certainly the good food, especially the numberless frogs; and while the learned men wrote down hastily, in flying characters, a sketch of the history of the two Princesses, and of the flower of health that had been a source of joy for the home and the land, the Stork-pair told the story to their family in their own fashion, but not till all had

eaten their fill, otherwise they would have found something more interesting to do than to listen to stories.

‘Now, at last, you will become something,’ whispered Stork-mamma, ‘there’s no doubt about that.’

‘What should I become?’ asked Stork-papa. ‘What have I done? Nothing at all!’

‘You have done more than the rest! But for you and the youngsters the two Princesses would never have seen Egypt again, or have effected the old man’s cure. You will turn out something! They must certainly give you a doctor’s degree, and our youngsters will inherit it, and so will their children after them, and so on. You already look like an Egyptian doctor—at least in my eyes.’

The learned and wise men developed the ground-thought, as they called it, which went through the whole affair. ‘Love begets life;’ this maxim they explained in various ways. ‘The warm sunbeam was the Egyptian Princess; she descended to the Marsh King, and from their meeting arose the flower——’

‘I cannot quite repeat the words as they were spoken,’ said Stork-papa, who had listened from the roof, and was now telling it again to his own family. ‘What they said was so involved, it was so wise and learned, that they immediately received rank and presents: even the head cook received an especial mark of distinction—probably for the soup.’

‘And what did you receive?’ asked Stork-mamma. ‘Surely they ought not to forget the most important person of all, and you are certainly he! The learned men have done nothing throughout the whole affair but used their tongues; but you will doubtless receive what is due to you.’

Late in the night, when the gentle peace of sleep rested upon the now happy house, there was one who still watched. It was not Stork-papa, though he stood upon one leg and slept on guard—it was Helga who watched. She bowed herself forward over the balcony, and looked into the clear air, gazed at the great gleaming stars, greater and purer in their lustre than she had ever seen them in the North, and yet the same orbs. She thought of the Viking woman in the wild moorland, of the gentle eyes of her foster-

mother, and of the tears which the kind soul had wept over the poor frog-child that now lived in splendour under the gleaming stars, in the beauteous spring air on the banks of the Nile. She thought of the love that dwelt in the breast of the heathen woman, the love that had been shown to a wretched creature, hateful in human form, and hideous in its transformation. She looked at the gleaming stars, and thought of the glory that had shone upon the forehead of the dead man, when she flew with him through the forest and across the moorland ; sounds passed through her memory, words she had heard pronounced as they rode onward, and when she was borne wondering and trembling through the air, words from the great Fountain of love that embraces all human kind.

Yes, great things had been achieved and won ! Day and night beautiful Helga was absorbed in the contemplation of the great sum of her happiness, and stood in the contemplation of it like a child that turns hurriedly from the giver to gaze on the splendours of the gifts it has received. She seemed to lose herself in the increasing happiness, in contemplation of what might come, of what would come. Had she not been borne by miracle to greater and greater bliss ? And in this idea she one day lost herself so completely, that she thought no more of the Giver. It was the exuberance of youthful courage, unfolding its wings for a bold flight ! Her eyes were gleaming with courage, when suddenly a loud noise in the courtyard below recalled her thoughts from their wandering flight. There she saw two great ostriches running round rapidly in a narrow circle. Never before had she seen such creatures—great clumsy things they were, with wings that looked as if they had been clipped, and the birds themselves looking as if they had suffered violence of some kind ; and now for the first time she heard the legend which the Egyptians tell of the ostrich.

Once, they say, the ostriches were a beautiful, glorious race of birds, with strong large wings ; and one evening the larger birds of the forest said to the ostrich, ‘ Brother, shall we fly to-morrow, God willing, to the river to drink ? ’ And the ostrich answered, ‘ I will.’ At daybreak, accordingly, they winged their flight from thence, flying first up

on high, towards the sun, that gleamed like the eye of God—higher and higher, the ostrich far in advance of all the other birds. Proudly the ostrich flew straight towards the light, boasting of his strength, and not thinking of the Giver, or saying, 'God willing!' Then suddenly the avenging angel drew aside the veil from the flaming ocean of sunlight, and in a moment the wings of the proud bird were scorched and shrivelled up, and he sank miserably to the ground. Since that time the ostrich has never again been able to raise himself in the air, but flees timidly along the ground, and runs round in a narrow circle. And this is a warning for us men, that in all our thoughts and schemes, in all our doings and devices, we should say, 'God willing.' And Helga bowed her head thoughtfully, and looked at the circling ostrich, noticing its timid fear, and its stupid pleasure at sight of its own great shadow cast upon the white sunlit wall. And seriousness struck its roots deep into her mind and heart. A rich life in present and future happiness was given and won; and what was yet to come? the best of all, 'God willing.'

In early spring, when the storks flew again towards the North, beautiful Helga took off her golden bracelet and scratched her name upon it; and beckoning to the Stork-papa, she placed the golden hoop around his neck, and begged him to deliver it to the Viking woman, so that the latter might see that her adopted daughter was well, and had not forgotten her.

'That's heavy to carry,' thought the Stork-papa, when he had the golden ring round his neck; 'but gold and honour are not to be flung on the highway. The stork brings good fortune; they'll be obliged to acknowledge that up there.'

'You lay gold and I lay eggs,' said the Stork-mamma. 'But with you it's only once in a way, whereas I lay eggs every year; but neither of us is appreciated—that's very disheartening.'

'Still one has one's inward consciousness, mother,' replied Stork-papa.

'But you can't hang that round your neck,' Stork-mamma retorted, 'and it won't give you a good wind or a good meal.'

The little nightingale, singing in the tamarind tree, would soon be going north too. Helga the fair had often heard the sweet bird sing up yonder by the wild moss ; now she wanted to give it a message to carry, for she had learned the language of birds when she flew in the swan's plumage ; she had often conversed with stork and with swallow, and she knew the nightingale would understand her. So she begged the little bird to fly to the beech-wood on the peninsula of Jutland, where the grave-mound had been reared with stones and branches, and asked the nightingale to beg all other little birds to build their nests around the grave, and sing their song there again and again. And the nightingale flew away—and time flew away.

In autumn the eagle stood upon the pyramid, and saw a stately train of richly laden camels approaching, and richly attired armed men on snorting Arab steeds, shining white as silver, with pink trembling nostrils, and great thick manes hanging down almost over their slender legs. Wealthy guests, a royal Prince of Arabia, handsome as a Prince should be, came into the proud mansion on whose roof the storks' nests now stood empty ; those who had inhabited the nest were away in the far North, but they would soon return. And, indeed, they returned on that very day that was so rich in joy and gladness. Here a marriage was celebrated, and fair Helga was the bride, shining in jewels and silk. The bridegroom was the young Arab Prince, and bride and bridegroom sat together at the upper end of the table, between mother and grandfather.

But her gaze was not fixed upon the bridegroom, with his manly sun-browned cheeks, round which a black beard curled ; she gazed not at his dark fiery eyes that were fixed upon her—but far away at a gleaming star that shone down from the sky.

Then strong wings were heard beating the air. The storks were coming home, and however tired the old Stork-pair might be from the journey, and however much they needed repose, they did not fail to come down at once to the balustrades of the verandah, for they knew what feast was being celebrated. Already on the frontier of the land they had heard that Helga had caused their figures to be painted on the wall—for did they not belong to her history ?

That 's very pretty and suggestive,' said Stork-papa.

'But it 's very little,' observed Stork-mamma. 'They could not possibly have done less.'

And when Helga saw them, she rose and came on to the verandah, to stroke the backs of the Storks. The old pair bowed their necks, and even the youngest among the young ones felt highly honoured by the reception.

And Helga looked up to the gleaming star, which seemed to glow purer and purer ; and between the star and herself there floated a form, purer than the air, and visible through it : it floated quite close to her. It was the spirit of the dead Christian priest ; he too was coming to her wedding feast—coming from heaven.

'The glory and brightness yonder outshines everything that is known on earth !' he said.

And fair Helga begged so fervently, so beseechingly, as she had never yet prayed, that it might be permitted her to gaze in there for one single moment, that she might be allowed to cast but a single glance into the brightness that beamed in the kingdom of heaven.

Then he bore her up amid splendour and glory. Not only around her, but within her, sounded voices and beamed a brightness that words cannot express.

'Now we must go back ; thou wilt be missed,' he said.

'Only one more look !' she begged. 'But one short minute more !'

'We must go back to the earth. The guests will all depart.'

'Only one more look—the last.'

And Helga stood again in the verandah ; but the marriage lights without had vanished, and the lamps in the hall were extinguished, and the storks were gone—nowhere a guest to be seen—no bridegroom—all seemed to have been swept away in those few short minutes !

Then a great dread came upon her. Alone she went through the empty great hall into the next chamber. Strange warriors slept yonder. She opened a side door which led into her own chamber, and, as she thought to step in there, she suddenly found herself in the garden ; but yet it had not looked thus here before—the sky gleamed red—the morning dawn was come.

Three minutes only in heaven and a whole night on earth had passed away !

Then she saw the Storks again. She called to them and spoke their language ; and Stork-papa turned his head towards her, listened to her words, and drew near.

‘ You speak our language,’ he said ; ‘ what do you wish ? Why do you appear here—you, a strange woman ? ’

‘ It is I—it is Helga—dost thou not know me ? Three minutes ago we were speaking together yonder in the verandah ! ’

‘ That ’s a mistake,’ said the Stork ; ‘ you must have dreamed that ! ’

‘ No, no ! ’ she persisted. And she reminded him of the Viking’s castle, and of the wild moss, and of the journey hither.

Then Stork-papa winked with his eyes, and said,

‘ That ’s an old story, which I heard from the time of my great-great-grandmother. There certainly was here in Egypt a Princess of that kind from the Danish land, but she vanished on the evening of her wedding-day, many hundred years ago, and never came back ! You may read about it yourself yonder on the monument in the garden ; there you’ll find swans and storks sculptured, and at the top you yourself are cut in white marble ! ’

And thus it was. Helga saw it, and understood it, and sank on her knees.

The sun burst forth in glory ; and as, in time of yore, the frog-shape had vanished in its beams, and the beautiful form had stood displayed, so now in the light a beauteous form, clearer, purer than air—a beam of brightness—flew up into heaven !

The body crumbled to dust, and a faded lotos flower lay on the spot where Helga had stood.

‘ Well, that ’s a new ending to the story,’ said Stork-papa. ‘ I had certainly not expected it. But I like it very well.’

‘ But what will the young ones say to it ? ’ said Stork-mamma.

‘ Yes, certainly, that ’s the important point,’ replied he.

THE GIRL WHO TROD ON THE LOAF

THE story of the girl who trod on the loaf to avoid soiling her shoes, and of the misfortune that befell this girl, is well known. It has been written, and even printed.

She was a poor child, but proud and presumptuous ; there was a bad foundation in her, as the saying is. When she was quite a little child, it was her delight to catch flies and tear off their wings, so as to make them into creeping things. She would take cockchafers and beetles, and spit them on pins. Then she pushed a green leaf or a little scrap of paper towards their feet, and the poor creatures seized it, and held it fast, and turned it over and over, struggling to get free from the pin.

‘The cockchafer is reading,’ said little Inger. ‘See how he turns the leaf!’

With years she grew worse rather than better ; but she was pretty, and that was her misfortune ; otherwise she would have been more sharply reproved than she was.

‘Your headstrong will requires something strong to break it!’ her own mother often said. ‘As a little child, you used to trample on my apron ; but I fear you will one day trample on my heart.’

And that is what she really did.

She was sent into the country, into service in the house of rich people, who treated her as their own child, and dressed her accordingly. She looked well, and her presumption increased.

When she had been there about a year, her mistress said to her, ‘You ought now to visit your parents, Inger.’

And she went too, but it was only to show herself, that they might see how grand she had become ; but when she came to the entrance of the village, and the young husbandmen and maids stood there chatting, and her own mother appeared among them, sitting on a stone to rest, and with a faggot of sticks before her that she had picked up in the wood, then Inger turned back, for she felt ashamed that she, who was so finely dressed, should have for a mother

a ragged woman, who picked up wood in the forest. She did not in the least feel sorry for having turned back, she was only annoyed.

And another half-year went by, and her mistress said again, ' You ought to go to your home, and visit your old parents, Inger. I'll make you a present of a great wheaten loaf that you may give to them : they will certainly be glad to see you again.'

And Inger put on her best clothes, and her new shoes, and drew her skirts around her, and set out, stepping very carefully, that she might be clean and neat about the feet ; and there was no harm in that. But when she came to the place where the footway led across the marsh, and where there was mud and puddles, she threw the loaf into the mud, and trod upon it to pass over without wetting her feet. But as she stood there with one foot upon the loaf and the other uplifted to step farther, the loaf sank with her, deeper and deeper, till she disappeared altogether, and only a great puddle, from which the bubbles rose, remained where she had been.

And that 's the story.

But whither did Inger go ? She went down to the marsh woman, who is always brewing there. The marsh woman is cousin to the elf maidens, who are well enough known, of whom songs are sung, and of whom pictures are painted ; but concerning the marsh woman it is only known that when the meadows steam in summer-time it is because she is brewing. Into the marsh woman's brewery did Inger sink down ; and no one can endure that place long. A box of mud is a palace compared with the marsh woman's brewery. Every barrel there had an odour that almost takes away one's senses ; and the barrels stand close to each other ; and wherever there is a little opening among them, through which one might push one's way, then one cannot get through for the number of damp toads and fat snakes who are all in a tangle there. Among this company did Inger fall ; and all the horrible mass of living creeping things was so icy cold, that she shuddered in all her limbs, and became stark and stiff. She continued fastened to the loaf, and the loaf drew her down as an amber button draws a fragment of straw.

The marsh woman was at home, and on that day the Devil and his grandmother had come to inspect the brewery ; and she is a venomous old woman, who is never idle : she never rides out to pay a visit without taking her work with her ; she also had it here. She sewed gadding leather to be worked into men's shoes, and that makes them



wander about unable to settle anywhere. She wove webs of lies, and strung together hastily-spoken words that had fallen to the ground ; and all this was done for the injury and ruin of mankind. Yes, indeed, she knew how to sew, to weave, and to string, did this old grandmother !

Catching sight of Inger, she put up her double eye-glass, and took another look at the girl.

‘That’s a girl who has ability !’ she observed, ‘and I beg you will give me the little one as a memento of my visit

here. She'll make a capital statue to stand in my grandson's antechamber.'

And Inger was given up to her, and this is how Inger came into Hell. People don't always go there by the direct path, but they can get there by roundabout routes if they have a tendency in that direction.

That was a never-ending antechamber. The visitor became giddy who looked forward, and doubly giddy when he looked back, and saw a whole crowd of people, almost utterly exhausted, waiting till the gate of mercy should be opened to them—they had to wait a long time! Great fat waddling spiders spun webs of a thousand years over their feet, and these webs cut like wire, and bound them like bronze fetters; and, moreover, there was an eternal unrest working in every heart—a miserable unrest. The miser stood there, and had forgotten the key of his strong box, and he knew the key was sticking in the lock. It would take too long to describe the various sorts of torture that were found there together. Inger felt a terrible pain while she had to stand there as a statue, for she was tied fast to the loaf.

'That's the fruit of wishing to keep one's feet neat and tidy,' she said to herself. 'Just look how they're all staring at me!'

Yes, certainly, the eyes of all were fixed upon her, and their evil thoughts gleamed forth from their eyes, and they spoke to one another, moving their lips, from which no sound whatever came forth: they were very horrible to behold.

'It must be a great pleasure to look at me!' thought Inger, 'and indeed I have a pretty face and fine clothes.' And she turned her eyes; her neck was too stiff to turn. But she had not considered how her clothes had been soiled in the marsh woman's brewhouse. Her garments were covered with mud; a snake had fastened in her hair, and dangled down her back; and out of each fold of her frock a great toad looked forth, croaking like an asthmatic poodle. That was very unpleasant. 'But all the rest of them down here also look horrible,' she observed to herself, and derived consolation from the thought.

The worst of all was the terrible hunger that tormented her. But could she not stoop and break off a piece of the

loaf on which she stood ? No, her back was too stiff, her hands and arms were benumbed, and her whole body was like a pillar of stone ; she was only able to turn her eyes in her head, to turn them quite round, so that she could see backwards : it was an ugly sight. And then the flies came up, and crept to and fro over her eyes, and she blinked her eyes, but the flies would not go away, for they could not fly : their wings had been pulled out, so that they were converted into creeping insects : it was horrible torment added to the hunger, for she felt empty, quite, entirely empty.

‘ If this lasts much longer,’ she said, ‘ I shall not be able to bear it.’

But she had to bear it, and it lasted on and on.

Then a hot tear fell down upon her head, rolled over her face and neck, down on to the loaf on which she stood ; and then another tear rolled down, followed by many more. Who might be weeping for Inger ? Had she not still a mother in the world ? The tears of sorrow which a mother weeps for her child always make their way to the child ; but they do not relieve it, they only increase its torment. And now to bear this unendurable hunger, and yet not to be able to touch the loaf on which she stood ! She felt as if she had been feeding on herself, and had become like a thin hollow reed that takes in every sound, for she heard everything that was said of her up in the world, and all that she heard was hard and evil. Her mother, indeed, wept much and sorrowed for her, but for all that she said, ‘ A haughty spirit goes before a fall. That was thy ruin, Inger. Thou hast sorely grieved thy mother.’

Her mother and all on earth knew of the sin she had committed ; knew that she had trodden upon the loaf, and had sunk and disappeared ; for the cowherd had seen it from the hill beside the marsh.

‘ Greatly hast thou grieved thy mother, Inger,’ said the mother ; ‘ yes, yes, I thought it would be thus.’

‘ Oh that I had never been born ! ’ thought Inger ; ‘ it would have been far better. But what use is my mother’s weeping now ? ’

And she heard how her master and mistress, who had kept and cherished her like kind parents, now said she was a sinful child, and did not value the gifts of God,

but trampled them under her feet, and that the gates of mercy would only open slowly to her.

'They should have punished me,' thought Inger, 'and have driven out the whims I had in my head.'

She heard how a complete song was made about her, a song of the proud girl who trod upon the loaf to keep her shoes clean, and she heard how the song was sung everywhere.

'That I should have to bear so much evil for that!' thought Inger; 'the others ought to be punished, too, for their sins. Yes, then there would be plenty of punishing to do. Ah, how I'm being tortured!'

And her heart became harder than her outward form.

'Here in this company one can't even become better,' she said, 'and I don't want to become better! Look, how they're all staring at me!' And her heart was full of anger and malice against all men. 'Now they've something to talk about at last up yonder. Ah, how I'm being tortured!'

And then she heard how her story was told to the little children, and the little ones called her the godless Inger, and said she was so naughty and ugly that she must be well punished.

Thus even the children's mouths spoke hard words of her.

But one day, while grief and hunger gnawed her hollow frame, and she heard her name mentioned and her story told to an innocent child, a little girl, she became aware that the little one burst into tears at the tale of the haughty, vain Inger.

'But will Inger never come up here again?' asked the little girl.

And the reply was, 'She will never come up again.'

'But if she were to beg for forgiveness, and say she would never do so again?'

'But she will not beg for forgiveness,' was the reply.

'I should be so glad if she would,' said the little girl; and she was quite inconsolable. 'I'll give my doll and all my playthings if she may only come up. It's too dreadful—poor Inger!'

And these words penetrated to Inger's heart, and seemed

to do her good. It was the first time any one had said, 'Poor Inger,' without adding anything about her faults : a little innocent child was weeping and praying for her. It made her feel quite strangely, and she herself would gladly have wept, but she could not weep, and that was a torment in itself.

While years were passing above her, for where she was there was no change, she heard herself spoken of more and more seldom. At last one day a sigh struck on her ear : 'Inger, Inger, how you have grieved me ! I said how it would be !' It was the last sigh of her dying mother.

Occasionally she heard her name spoken by her former employers, and they were pleasant words when the woman said, 'Shall I ever see thee again, Inger ? One knows not what may happen.'

But Inger knew right well that her good mistress would never come to the place where she was.

And again time went on—a long, bitter time. Then Inger heard her name pronounced once more, and saw two bright stars that seemed gleaming above her. They were two gentle eyes closing upon earth. So many years had gone by since the little girl had been inconsolable and wept about 'poor Inger', that the child had become an old woman, who was now to be called home to heaven ; and in the last hour of existence, when the events of the whole life stand at once before us, the old woman remembered how as a child she had cried heartily at the story of Inger. That time and that impression came so clearly before the old woman in her last hour, that she called out quite loud : 'Have not I also, like Inger, often trod upon the gifts of heaven without thinking ? have not I also gone about with pride at my heart ? Yet Thou in Thy mercy hast not let me sink, but hast held me up. Leave me not in my last hour !'

And the eyes of the old woman closed, and the eye of her soul was opened to look upon the hidden things. She, in whose last thoughts Inger had been present so vividly, saw how deeply the poor girl had sunk, and burst into tears at the sight ; in heaven she stood like a child, and wept for poor Inger. And her tears and prayers sounded like

an echo in the dark empty space that surrounded the tormented captive soul, and the un hoped-for love from above conquered her, for an angel was weeping for her. Why was this vouchsafed to her? The tormented soul seemed to gather in her thoughts every deed she had done on earth, and she, Inger, trembled and wept such tears as she had never yet wept. She was filled with sorrow about herself: it seemed as though the gate of mercy could never open to her; and while in deep penitence she acknowledged this, a beam of light shot radiantly down into the depths to her, with a greater force than that of the sun-beam which melts the snow man the boys have built up; and quicker than the snow-flake melts, and becomes a drop of water that falls on the warm lips of a child, the stony form of Inger was changed to mist, and a little bird soared with the speed of lightning upward into the world of men. But the bird was timid and shy towards all things around; it was ashamed of itself, ashamed to encounter any living thing, and hurriedly sought to conceal itself in a dark hole in an old crumbling wall; there it sat cowering, trembling through its whole frame, and unable to utter a sound, for it had no voice. Long it sat there before it could rightly see all the beauty around it; for beauty there was. The air was fresh and mild, the moon shone so clear; trees and bushes exhaled fragrance, and it was right pleasant where it sat, and its coat of feathers was clean and pure. How all creation seemed to speak of beneficence and love! The bird wanted to sing of the thoughts that stirred in its breast, but it could not; gladly would it have sung as the cuckoo and the nightingale sang in spring-time. But Heaven, that hears the mute song of praise of the worm, could hear the notes of praise which now trembled in the breast of the bird, as David's psalms were heard before they had fashioned themselves into words and song.

For weeks these toneless songs stirred within the bird; at last, the holy Christmas-time approached. The peasant who dwelt near set up a pole by the old wall, with some ears of corn bound to the top, that the birds of heaven might have a good meal, and rejoice in the happy, blessed time.

And on Christmas morning the sun arose and shone upon the ears of corn, which were surrounded by a number of twittering birds. Then out of the hole in the wall streamed forth the voice of another bird, and the bird soared forth from its hiding-place ; and in heaven it was well known what bird this was.

It was a hard winter. The ponds were covered with ice, and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air were stinted for food. Our little bird flew away over the high road, and in the ruts of the sledges it found here and there a grain of corn, and at the halting-places some crumbs. Of these it ate only a few, but it called all the other hungry sparrows around it, that they, too, might have some food. It flew into the towns, and looked round about ; and wherever a kind hand had strewn bread on the window-sill for the birds, it only ate a single crumb itself, and gave all the rest to the other birds.

In the course of the winter, the bird had collected so many bread crumbs, and given them to the other birds, that they equalled the weight of the loaf on which Inger had trod to keep her shoes clean ; and when the last bread crumb had been found and given, the grey wings of the bird became white, and spread far out.

‘ Yonder is a sea-swallow, flying away across the water,’ said the children when they saw the white bird. Now it dived into the sea, and now it rose again into the clear sunlight. It gleamed white ; but no one could tell whither it went, though some asserted that it flew straight into the sun.

THE ICE MAIDEN

I

LITTLE RUDY

LET us visit Switzerland, and wander through the glorious land of mountains, where the forests cling to the steep walls of rock ; let us mount up to the dazzling snow-fields, and then descend into the green valleys through which rivers and brooks are rushing, hurrying on as if they could not reach the sea and disappear there quickly enough. The sun looks hotly down upon the deep valley, and it glares likewise upon the heavy masses of snow, so that they harden in the course of centuries into gleaming blocks of ice, or form themselves into falling avalanches, or become piled up into glaciers. Two such glaciers lie in the broad rocky gorges under the ' Schreckhorn ' and the ' Wetterhorn ', by the little mountain town of Grindelwald : they are wonderful to behold, and therefore in the summer-time many strangers come from all parts of the world to see them. The strangers come across the lofty snow-covered mountains, they come through the deep valleys ; and in this latter case they must climb for several hours, and, as they climb, the valley seems to be descending behind them, deeper and deeper, and they look down upon it as out of a balloon. Above them the clouds often hang like thick heavy veils of smoke over the mountain-tops, while a sunbeam still penetrates into the valley, through which the many brown wooden houses lie scattered, making one particular spot stand forth in shining transparent green. Down there the water hums and gushes, while above, it purls and ripples and looks like silver bands fluttering down the mountain.

On both sides of the road that leads uphill, stand wooden houses. Each has its potato patch ; and this is a necessity, for there are many little mouths in those cottages—plenty of children are there, who can eat up their share right heartily. They peep forth everywhere, and gather round the traveller, whether he be on foot or in a carriage. All the children here carry on a trade : the

little people offer carved houses for sale, models of those that are built here in the mountains. In rain or in sunshine, there are the children offering their wares.

About twenty years ago, a little boy might often be seen standing there, anxious to carry on his trade, but always standing a short distance away from the rest. He would stand there with a very grave face, holding his little box with the carved toys so firmly in both hands that it seemed as if he would not let it go on any account. This appearance of earnestness, together with the fact of his being such a little fellow, often attracted the notice of strangers; so that he was very frequently beckoned forward, and relieved of a great part of his stock, without himself knowing why this preference was shown him. A couple of miles away, in the mountains, lived his grandfather, who carved the pretty little houses; and in the old man's room stood a wooden cupboard filled with things of that kind—carved toys in abundance, nutcrackers, knives and forks, boxes adorned with carved leaves and with jumping chamois, all kinds of things that delight children's eyes; but the boy, Rudy was his name, looked with greater longing at an old rifle that hung from the beam under the ceiling, for his grandfather had promised him that it should be his one day, when he should have grown tall and strong enough to manage it properly.

Young as the boy was, he had to keep the goats; and if ability to climb with his flock makes a good goat-herd, then Rudy was certainly an efficient one, for he even climbed a little higher than the goats could mount, and loved to take the birds' nests from the high trees. A bold and courageous child he was, but he was never seen to smile, save when he stood by the foaming waterfall or heard an avalanche crashing down the mountain-side. He never played with the other children, and only came in contact with them when his grandfather sent him down the mountain to deal in carved toys; and this was a business Rudy did not exactly like. He preferred clambering about alone among the mountains, or sitting beside his grandfather and hearing the old man tell stories of the old times, or of the people in the neighbouring town of Meiringen, his birthplace. The old man said that the people

who dwelt in that place had not been there from the beginning : they had come into the land from the far north, where their ancestors dwelt, who were called Swedes. And Rudy was very proud of knowing this. But he had others who taught him something, and these others were companions of his belonging to the animal creation. There was a great dog, whose name was Ajola, and who had belonged to Rudy's father ; and a Tom Cat was there too ; this Tom Cat had a special significance for Rudy, for it was Pussy who had taught him to climb.

'Come with me out on the roof,' the Cat had said, quite distinctly and plainly, to Rudy ; for, you see, children who cannot talk yet, can understand the language of fowls and ducks right well, and cats and dogs speak to them quite as plainly as Father and Mother can do ; but that is only when the children are very little, and then, even Grandfather's stick will become a perfect horse to them, and can neigh, and, in their eyes, is furnished with head and legs and tail. With some children this period ends later than with others, and of such we are accustomed to say that they are very backward, and that they have remained children a long time. People are in the habit of saying many strange things.

'Come out with me on to the roof,' was perhaps the first thing the Cat had said and that Rudy had understood. 'What people say about falling down is all fancy : one does not fall down if one is not afraid. Just you come, and put one of your paws thus and the other thus. Feel your way with your fore-paws. You must have eyes in your head and nimble limbs ; and if an empty space comes, jump over, and then hold tight as I do.'

And Rudy did so too ; consequently he was often found seated on the top of the roof by the Cat ; and afterwards he sat with him in the tree-tops, and at last was even seen seated on the edge of the cliff, whither Puss did not go.

'Higher up !' said Tree and Bush. 'Don't you see how we climb ? How high we reach, and how tight we cling, even to the narrowest, loftiest ridge of rock !'

And Rudy climbed to the very summit of the mountain, frequently reaching the top before the sun touched it, and there he drank his morning draught of fresh mountain air,

the draught that the bountiful Creator above can prepare, and the recipe for making which, according to the reading of men, consists in mingling the fragrant aroma of the mountain herbs with the scent of the wild thyme and mint of the valley. All that is heavy is absorbed by the brooding clouds, and then the wind drives them along, and rubs them against the tree-tops, and the spirit of fragrance is infused into the air to make it lighter and fresher, ever fresher. And this was Rudy's morning draught.

The sunbeams, the blessing-laden daughters of the sun, kissed his cheeks, and Giddiness, who stood lurking by, never ventured to approach him ; but the swallows, who had no less than seven nests on his grandfather's roof, flew round about him and his goats, and sang, ' We and ye ! we and ye ! ' They brought him a greeting from home, even from the two fowls, the only birds in the house, but with whom Rudy never became at all intimate.

Small as he was, he had been a traveller, and for such a little fellow he had made no mean journey. He had been born over in the Canton of Wallis, and had been carried across the high mountains to his present dwelling. Not long ago he had made a pilgrimage on foot to the ' Staubbach ' or ' Dust Fountain ', which flutters through the air like a silver tissue before the snow-covered dazzling white mountain called the ' Jungfrau ' or ' Maiden '. He had also been in the Grindelwald, at the great glacier ; but that was a sad story. His mother had met her death there ; and there, said Grandfather, little Rudy had lost his childlike cheerfulness. When the boy was not a year old his mother had written concerning him that he laughed more than he cried, but from the time when he sat in the ice cleft, another spirit came upon him. His grandfather seldom talked of it, but the people through the whole mountain region knew the story.

Rudy's father had been a postilion. The great dog that lay in grandfather's room had always followed him in his journeys over the Simplon down to the Lake of Geneva. In the valley of the Rhone, in the Canton of Wallis, lived some relatives of Rudy on the father's side. His uncle was a first-rate chamois hunter and a well-known guide. Rudy was only a year old when he lost his father,

and the mother now longed to return with her child to her relatives in the Oberland of Berne. Her father lived a few miles from Grindelwald; he was a wood-carver, and earned enough to live on. Thus, in the month of June, carrying her child, and accompanied by two chamois hunters, she set out on her journey home, across the Gemmi towards Grindelwald. They had already gone the greater part of the way, had crossed the high ridge as far as the snow-field, and already caught sight of the valley of home, with all the well-known wooden houses, and had only one great glacier to cross. The snow had fallen freshly, and concealed a cleft which did not indeed reach to the deep ground where the water gushed, but was still more than six feet deep. The young mother, with her child in her arms, stumbled, slipped over the edge, and vanished. No cry was heard, no sigh, but they could hear the crying of the little child. More than an hour elapsed before ropes and poles could be brought up from the nearest house for the purpose of giving help, and after much exertion what appeared to be two corpses were brought forth from the icy cleft. Every means was tried; and the child, but not the mother, was recalled to life; and thus the old grandfather had a daughter's son brought into his house, an orphan, the boy who had laughed more than he cried; but it seemed that a great change had taken place in him, and this change must have been wrought in the glacier cleft, in the cold wondrous ice world, in which, according to the Swiss peasants' belief, the souls of the wicked are shut up until the last day.

The glacier lies stretched out, a foaming body of water stiffened into ice, and as it were pressed together into green blocks, one huge lump piled upon another; from beneath it the rushing stream of melted ice and snow thunders down into the valley, and deep caverns and great clefts extend below. It is a wondrous glass palace, and within dwells the Ice Maiden, the Glacier Queen. She, the death-dealing, the crushing one, is partly a child of air, partly the mighty ruler of the river; thus she is also able to raise herself to the summit of the snow mountain, where the bold climbers are obliged to hew steps in the ice before they can mount; she sails on the slender fir twig down

the rushing stream, and springs from one block to another, with her long snow-white hair and her blue-green garment fluttering around her and glittering like the water in the deep Swiss lakes.

‘To crush and to hold, mine is the power!’ she says. ‘They have stolen a beautiful boy from me, a boy whom I have kissed, but not kissed to death. He is again among men: he keeps the goats on the mountains, and climbs upward, ever higher, far away from the others, but not from me. He is mine, and I will have him!’

And she bade Giddiness do her errand, for it was too hot for the Ice Maiden, in summer, in the green woods where the wild mint grows; and Giddiness raised herself and came down; and her sisters went with her, for she has many sisters, a whole troop of them; and the Ice Maiden chose the strongest of the many who hover without and within. These spirits sit on the staircase railing and upon the railing at the summit of the tower; they run like squirrels along the rocky ridge, they spring over railing and path, and tread the air as a swimmer treads the water, luring their victims forth, and hurling them down into the abyss. Giddiness and the Ice Maiden both grasp at a man as a polypus grasps at everything that comes near it. And now Giddiness was to seize upon Rudy.

‘Yes, but to seize *him*,’ said Giddiness, ‘is more than I can do. The cat, that wretched creature, has taught him her tricks. That child has a particular power which thrusts me away; I am not able to seize him, this boy, when he hangs by a bough over the abyss. How gladly would I tickle the soles of his feet, or thrust him head over heels into the air! But I am not able to do it.’

‘We shall manage to do it,’ said the Ice Maiden. ‘Thou or I—I shall do it—I!’

‘No, no!’ sounded a voice around her, like the echo of the church bells among the mountains; but it was a song; it was the melting chorus of other spirits of nature—of good affectionate spirits—the Daughters of the Sunshine. These hover every evening in a wreath about the summits of the mountains; there they spread forth their roseate wings, which become more and more fiery as the sun sinks, and gleam above the high mountains. The

people call this the 'Alpine glow'. And then, when the sun has set, they retire into the mountain summits, into the white snow, and slumber there until the sun rises again, when they appear once more. They are especially fond of flowers, butterflies, and human beings; and among these latter they had chosen Rudy as an especial favourite.

'You shall not catch him—you shall not have him,' they said.

'I have caught them larger and stronger than he,' said the Ice Maiden.

Then the Daughters of the Sun sang a song of the wanderer whose mantle the storm carried away.

'The wind took the covering, but not the man. Ye can seize him, but not hold him, ye children of strength. He is stronger, he is more spiritual than even we are. He will mount higher than the sun, our parent. He possesses the magic word that binds wind and water, so that they must serve him and obey him. You will but loosen the heavy oppressive weight that holds him down, and he will rise all the higher.'

Gloriously swelled the chorus that sounded like the ringing of the church bells.

And every morning the sunbeams pierced through the one little window into the grandfather's house, and shone upon the quiet child. The Daughters of the Sunbeams kissed the boy; they wanted to thaw and remove the icy kisses which the royal maiden of the glaciers had given him when he lay in the lap of his dead mother in the deep ice cleft, from whence he had been saved as if by a miracle.

II

THE JOURNEY TO THE NEW HOME

Rudy was now eight years old. His uncle, who dwelt beyond the mountains in the Rhone valley, wished that the boy should come to him to learn something and get on in the world; the grandfather saw the justice of this, and let the lad go.

Accordingly Rudy said good-bye. There were others

besides his grandfather to whom he had to say farewell ; and foremost came Ajola, the old dog.

‘Your father was the postilion and I was the post dog,’ said Ajola ; ‘we went to and fro together ; and I know some dogs from beyond the mountains, and some people too. I was never much of a talker ; but now that we most likely shall not be able to talk much longer together, I will tell you a little more than usual. I will tell you a story that I have kept to myself and ruminated on for a long while. I don’t understand it, and you won’t understand it, but that does not signify : this much at least I have made out, that things are not quite equally divided in the world, either for dogs or for men. Not all are destined to sit on a lady’s lap and to drink milk : *I’ve* not been accustomed to it, but *I’ve* seen one of those little lap dogs, driving in the coach, and taking up a passenger’s place in it ; the lady, who was its mistress, or whose master it was, had a little bottle of milk with her, out of which she gave the dog a drink ; and she offered him sweetmeats, but he only sniffed at them, and would not even accept them, and then she ate them up herself. I was running along in the mud beside the carriage, as hungry as a dog can be, chewing my own thoughts, that this could not be quite right ; but they say a good many things are going on that are not quite right. Should you like to sit in a lady’s lap and ride in a coach ? I should be glad if you did. But one can’t manage that for oneself. I never could manage it, either by barking or howling.’

These were Ajola’s words ; and Rudy embraced him and kissed him heartily on his wet nose ; then the lad took the Cat in his arms, but Puss struggled, saying,

‘You’re too strong for me, and I don’t like to use my claws against you ! Clamber away over the mountains, for I have taught you how to climb. Don’t think that you can fall, and then you will be sure to maintain your hold.’

And so saying the Cat ran away, not wishing Rudy to see that the tears were in his eyes.

The Fowls were strutting about in the room. One of them had lost its tail. A traveller who wanted to be a

sportsman had shot the Fowl's tail away, looking upon the bird as a bird of prey.

'Rudy wants to go across the mountains,' said one of the Fowls.

'He 's always in a hurry,' said the other, 'and I don't like saying good-bye.'

And with this they both tripped away.

To the Goats he also said farewell; and they bleated 'Meek! meek!' which made him feel very sorrowful.

Two brave guides from the neighbourhood, who wanted to go across the mountains to the other side of the Gemmi, took him with them, and he followed them on foot. It was a tough march for such a little fellow, but Rudy was a strong boy, and his courage never gave way.

The Swallows flew with them for a little distance. 'We and ye! we and ye!' sang they. The road led across the foaming Lütchine, which pours forth in many little streams from the black cleft of the Grindelwald glacier and fallen trunks of trees and blocks of stone serve for a bridge. When they had reached the forest opposite, they began to ascend the slope where the glacier had slipped away from the mountain, and now they strode across and around ice blocks over the glacier. Rudy sometimes had alternately to crawl and to walk for some distance: his eyes gleamed with delight, and he trod so firmly in his spiked climbing-shoes that it seemed as if he wished to leave a trace behind him at every footstep. The black earth which the mountain stream had strewn over the glacier gave the great mass a swarthy look, but the bluish-green glassy ice nevertheless peered through. They had to make circuits round the numerous little lakes which had formed among the great blocks of ice, and now and then they passed close to a great stone that lay tottering on the edge of a crack in the ice, and sometimes the stone would overbalance, and roll crashing down, and a hollow echo sounded forth from the deep dark fissures in the glacier.

Thus they continued climbing. The glacier itself extended upwards like a mighty river of piled-up ice masses, shut in by steep rocks. Rudy thought for a moment of the tale they had told him, how he and his mother had

lain in one of these deep, cold-breathing fissures ; but soon all such thoughts vanished from him, and the tale seemed to him only like many others of the same kind which he had heard. Now and then, when the men thought the way too toilsome for the little lad, they would reach him a hand ; but he did not grow tired, and stood on the smooth ice as safely as a chamois. Now they stepped on the face of the rock, and strode on among the rugged stones ; sometimes, again, they marched among the pine trees, and then over the pasture grounds, ever seeing new and changing landscapes. Around them rose snow-clad mountains, whose names the ‘ Jungfrau ’, the ‘ Mönch ’, the ‘ Eiger ’, were known to every child, and consequently to Rudy too. Rudy had never yet been so high ; he had never yet stepped on the outspread sea of snow : here it lay with its motionless snowy billows, from which the wind every now and then blew off a flake, as it blows the foam from the waves of the sea. The glaciers stand here, so to speak, hand in hand ; each one is a glass palace for the Ice Maiden, whose might and whose desire it is to catch and to bury. The sun shone warm, the snow was dazzlingly white and seemed strewn with bluish sparkling diamonds. Numberless insects, especially butterflies and bees, lay dead upon the snow ; they had ventured too high, or the wind had carried them up until they perished in the frosty air. Above the Wetterhorn hung, like a bundle of fine black wool, a threatening cloud ; it bowed down, teeming with the weight it bore, the weight of a whirlwind, irresistible when once it bursts forth. The impressions of this whole journey—the night encampment in these lofty regions, the further walk, the deep rocky chasms, where the water has pierced through the blocks of stone by a labour, at the thought of whose duration the mind stands still—all this was indelibly impressed upon Rudy’s recollection.

A deserted stone building beyond the snow sea offered them a shelter for the night. Here they found fuel and pine branches, and soon a fire was kindled, and the bed arranged for the night as comfortably as possible. Then the men seated themselves round the fire, smoked their pipes, and drank the warm refreshing drink they had prepared for themselves. Rudy received his share of the

supper ; and then the men began telling stories of the mysterious beings of the Alpine land : of the strange gigantic serpents that lay coiled in the deep lakes ; of the marvellous company of spirits that had been known to carry sleeping men by night through the air to the wonderful floating city, Venice ; of the wild shepherd who drove his black sheep across the mountain pastures, and how, though no man had seen him, the sound of the bell and the ghostly bleating of the flock had been heard by many. Rudy listened attentively, but without any feeling of fear, for he knew not what fear meant ; and while he listened he seemed to hear the hollow, unearthly bleating and lowing ; and it became more and more audible, so that presently the men heard it too, and stopped in their talk to listen, and told Rudy he must not go to sleep.

It was a ' Föhn ', the mighty whirlwind that hurls itself from the mountains into the valley, cracking the trees in its strength as if they were feeble reeds, and carrying the wooden houses from one bank of a river to the other as we move the figures on a chessboard.

After the lapse of about an hour, they told Rudy it was all over, and he might go to sleep ; and tired out with his long march, he went to sleep as at the word of command.

Very early next morning they resumed their journey. This day the sun shone on new mountains for Rudy, on fresh glaciers and new fields of snow : they had entered the Canton of Wallis, and had proceeded beyond the ridge which could be seen from the Grindelwald ; but they were still far from the new home. Other chasms came in view, new valleys, forests, and mountain paths, and new houses also came into view, and other people. But what strange-looking people were these ! They were deformed, and had fat, sallow faces ; and from their necks hung heavy, ugly lumps of flesh, like bags : they were *crétins*, dragging themselves languidly along, and looking at the strangers with stupid eyes ; the women especially were hideous in appearance. Were the people in his new home like these ?

III

UNCLE

Thank Heaven! the people in the house of Rudy's uncle, where the boy was now to live, looked like those he had been accustomed to see; only one of them was a *crétin*, a poor idiotic lad, one of those pitiable creatures who wander in their loneliness from house to house in the Canton of Wallis, staying a couple of months with each family. Poor Saperli happened to be at Rudy's uncle's when the boy arrived.

Uncle was still a stalwart huntsman, and, moreover, understood the craft of tub-making; his wife was a little lively woman with a face like a bird's. She had eyes like an eagle, and her neck was covered with a fluffy down.

Everything here was new to Rudy—costume, manners, and habits, and even the language; but to the latter the child's ear would soon adapt itself. There was an appearance of wealth here, compared with grandfather's dwelling. The room was larger, the walls were ornamented with chamois horns, among which hung polished rifles, and over the door was a picture of the Madonna, with fresh Alpine roses and a lamp burning in front of it.

As already stated, uncle was one of the best chamois hunters in the whole country, and one of the most trusted guides. In this household Rudy was now to become the pet child. There was one pet here already in the person of an old blind and deaf hound, who no longer went out hunting as he had been used to do; but his good qualities of former days had not been forgotten, and therefore he was looked upon as one of the family and carefully tended. Rudy stroked the dog, who, however, was not willing to make acquaintance with a stranger; but Rudy did not long remain a stranger in that house.

'It is not bad living, here in the Canton of Wallis,' said uncle; 'and we have chamois here, who don't die out so quickly as the steinbock; and it is much better here now than in former days. They may say what they like in honour of the old times, but ours are better, after all: the bag has been opened, and a fresh wind blows through our sequestered valley. Something better always comes

up when the old is worn out,' he continued. And when uncle was in a very communicative mood, he would tell of his youthful years, and of still earlier times, the strong times of his father, when Wallis was, as he expressed it, a closed bag, full of sick people and miserable *crétins*. 'But the French soldiers came in,' he said, 'and they were the proper doctors, for they killed the disease at once, and they killed the people who had it too. They knew all about fighting, did the French, and they could fight in more than one way. Their girls could make conquests too,' and then uncle would laugh and nod to his wife, who was a Frenchwoman by birth. 'The French hammered away at our stones in famous style! They hammered the Simplon road through the rocks—such a road that I can now say to a child of three years, "Go to Italy, only keep to the high road," and the child will arrive safely in Italy if it does not stray from the road.'

And then uncle would sing a French song, and cry 'Hurrah for Napoleon Bonaparte!'

Here Rudy for the first time heard them tell of France and Lyons, the great town on the Rhone, where his uncle had been.

Not many years were to elapse before Rudy should become an expert chamois hunter; his uncle said he had the stuff for it in him, and accordingly taught him to handle a rifle, to take aim, and shoot; and in the hunting season he took the lad with him into the mountains and let him drink the warm blood of the chamois, which cures the huntsman of giddiness; he also taught him to judge of the various times when the avalanches would roll down the mountains, at noon or at evening, according as the sunbeams had shone upon the place; he taught him to notice the way the chamois sprang, that Rudy might learn to come down firmly on his feet; and told him that where the rocky cleft gave no support for the foot, a man must cling by his elbows, hips, and legs, and that even the neck could be used as a support in case of need. The chamois were clever, he said—they posted sentinels; but the hunter should be more clever still—keep out of the line of scent, and lead them astray; and one day when Rudy was out hunting with uncle, the latter hung his coat and

hat on the alpenstock, and the chamois took the coat for a man.

The rocky path was narrow ; it was, properly speaking, not a path at all, but merely a narrow shelf beside the yawning abyss. The snow that lay here was half thawed, the stone crumbled beneath the tread, and therefore uncle laid himself down and crept forward. Every fragment that crumbled away from the rock fell down, jumping and rolling from one ledge of rock to another until it was lost to sight in the darkness below. About a hundred paces behind his uncle, stood Rudy, on a firm projecting point of rock ; and from this station he saw a great vulture circling in the air and hovering over uncle, whom it evidently intended to hurl into the abyss with a blow of its wings, that it might make a prey of him. Uncle's whole attention was absorbed by the chamois, which was to be seen, with its young one, on the other side of the cleft. Rudy kept his eyes on the bird. He knew what the vulture intended to do, and accordingly stood with his rifle ready to fire ; when suddenly the chamois leaped up : uncle fired, and the creature fell pierced by the deadly bullet ; but the young one sprang away as if it had been accustomed all its life to flee from danger. Startled by the sound of the rifle, the great bird soared away in another direction, and uncle knew nothing of the danger in which he had stood until Rudy informed him of it.

As they were returning homeward, in the best spirits, uncle whistling one of the songs of his youth, they suddenly heard a peculiar noise not far from them ; they looked around, and there on the declivity of the mountain, the snowy covering suddenly rose, and began to heave up and down, like a piece of linen stretched on a field when the wind passes beneath it. The snow waves, which had been smooth and hard as marble slabs, now broke to pieces, and the roar of waters sounded like rumbling thunder. An avalanche was falling, not over Rudy and uncle, but near where they stood, not at all far from them.

‘ Hold fast, Rudy ! ’ cried uncle, ‘ hold fast with all your strength.’

And Rudy clung to the trunk of the nearest tree. Uncle clambered up above him, and the avalanche rolled past,

many feet from them ; but the concussion of the air, the stormy wings of the avalanche, broke trees and shrubs all around as if they had been frail reeds, and scattered the fragments headlong down. Rudy lay crouched upon the earth, the trunk of the tree to which he clung was split through, and the crown hurled far away ; and there among the broken branches lay uncle, with his head shattered : his hand was still warm, but his face could no longer be recognized. Rudy stood by him pale and trembling ; it was the first fright of his life—the first time he felt a shudder run through him.

Late at night he brought the sorrowful news into his home, which was now a house of mourning. The wife could find no words, no tears for her grief ; at last, when the corpse was brought home, her sorrow found utterance. The poor *crétin* crept into his bed, and was not seen during the whole of the next day ; but at last, towards evening, he stole up to Rudy.

‘ Write a letter for me,’ he said. ‘ Saperli can’t write, but Saperli can carry the letter to the post.’

‘ A letter from you ? ’ asked Rudy. ‘ And to whom ? ’

‘ To the Lord.’

‘ To *whom* do you say ? ’

And the simpleton, as they called the *crétin*, looked at Rudy with a moving glance, folded his hands, and said solemnly and slowly,

‘ To the Saviour ! Saperli will send Him a letter, and beg that Saperli may lie dead, and not the man in the house here.’

Rudy pressed his hand, and said,

‘ The letter would not arrive, and it cannot restore him to us.’

But it was very difficult to make poor Saperli believe that this was impossible.

‘ Now thou art the prop of this house,’ said the widow ; and Rudy became that.

IV

BABETTE

Who is the best marksman in the Canton of Wallis ? The chamois knew well enough, and said to each other, 'Beware of Rudy.' Who is the handsomest marksman ? 'Why, Rudy,' said the girls ; but *they* did not add, 'Beware of Rudy.' Nor did even the grave mothers pronounce such a warning, for Rudy nodded at them just as kindly as at the young maidens. How quick and merry he was ! His cheeks were browned, his teeth regular and white, and his eyes black and shining ; he was a handsome lad, and only twenty years old. The icy water could not harm him when he swam ; he could turn and twist in the water like a fish, and climb better than any man in the mountains ; he could cling like a snail to the rocky ledge, for he had good sinews and muscles of his own ; and he showed that in his power of jumping, an art he had learned first from the Cat and afterwards from the goats. Rudy was the safest guide to whom any man could trust himself, and might have amassed a fortune in that calling ; his uncle had also taught him the craft of tub-making ; but he did not take to that occupation, preferring chamois hunting, which also brought in money. Rudy was what might be called a good match, if he did not look higher than his station. And he was such a dancer that the girls dreamed of him, and indeed more than one of them carried the thought of him into her waking hours.

'He kissed me once at the dance !' said the school-master's daughter Annette to her dearest girl-friend ; but she should not have said that, even to her dearest friend. A secret of that kind is hard to keep—it is like sand in a sieve, sure to run out ; and soon it was known that Rudy, honest lad though he was, kissed his partner in the dance ; and yet he had not kissed the one whom he would have liked best of all to kiss.

'Yes,' said an old hunter, 'he has kissed Annette. He has begun with A, and will kiss his way through the whole alphabet.'

A kiss at the dance was all that the busy tongues could

say against him until now: he had certainly kissed Annette, but she was not the beloved one of his heart.

Down in the valley near Bex, among the great walnut trees, by a little brawling mountain stream, lived the rich miller. The dwelling-house was a great building, three stories high, with little towers, roofed with planks and covered with plates of metal that shone in the sunlight and in the moonlight; the principal tower was surmounted by a weather-vane, a flashing arrow that had pierced an apple—an emblem of Tell's famous feat. The mill looked pleasant and comfortable, and could be easily drawn and described; but the miller's daughter could neither be drawn nor described—so, at least, Rudy would have said; and yet she was portrayed in his heart, where her eyes gleamed so brightly that they had lighted up a fire. This had burst out quite suddenly, as other fires break forth; and the strangest thing of all was, that the miller's daughter, pretty Babette, had no idea of the conquest she had made, for she and Rudy had never exchanged a word together.

The miller was rich, and this wealth of his made Babette very difficult to get at. But nothing is so high that it may not be reached if a man will but climb; and he will not fall, if he is not afraid of falling. That was a lesson Rudy had brought from his first home.

Now it happened that on one occasion Rudy had some business to do in Bex. It was quite a journey thither, for in those days the railway had not yet been completed. From the Rhone glacier, along the foot of the Simplon, away among many changing mountain heights, the proud valley of Wallis extends, with its mighty river the Rhone, which often overflows its banks and rushes across the fields and high roads, carrying destruction with it. Between the little towns of Sion and St. Maurice the valley makes a bend, like an elbow, and becomes so narrow below St. Maurice that it only affords room for the bed of the river and a narrow road. An old tower here stands as a sentinel at the boundary of the Canton of Wallis, which ends here. The tower looks across over the stone bridge at the toll-house on the opposite side. There commences the Canton of Vaud, and at a little distance is the first town of that Canton, Bex. At every step the signs of

fertility and plenty increase, and the traveller seems to be journeying through a garden of walnut trees and chestnuts ; here and there cypresses appear, and blooming pomegranates ; and the climate has the southern warmth of Italy.

Rudy duly arrived in Bex, and concluded his business there ; then he took a turn in the town ; but not even a miller's lad, much less Babette, did he see there. That was not as it should be.

Evening came on ; the air was full of the fragrance of the wild thyme and of the blooming lime trees ; a gleaming bluish veil seemed to hang over the green mountains ; far around reigned a silence—not the silence of sleep or of death, but a stillness as if all nature held its breath, as if it were waiting to have its picture photographed upon the blue sky. Here and there among the trees on the green meadows stood long poles, supporting the telegraph wires that had been drawn through the quiet valley ; against one of these leaned an object, so motionless that it might have been taken for the trunk of a tree ; but it was Rudy, who stood as quiet and motionless as all nature around him. He did not sleep, nor was he dead by any means ; but just as the records of great events sometimes fly along the telegraph—messages of vital importance to those whom they concern, while the wire gives no sign, by sound or movement, of what is passing over it—so there was passing through the mind of Rudy a thought which was to be the happiness of his whole life and his one absorbing idea from that moment. His eyes were fixed on one point—on a light that gleamed out among the trees from the chamber of the miller where Babette dwelt. So motionless did Rudy stand here, one might have thought he was taking aim at a chamois, a creature which sometimes stands as if carved out of the rock, till suddenly, if a stone should roll down, it springs away in a headlong career. And something of this kind happened to Rudy—suddenly a thought rolled into his mind.

‘ Never falter ! ’ he cried. ‘ Pay a visit to the mill, say good evening to the miller and good evening to Babette. He does not fall who is not afraid of falling. Babette must see me, sooner or later, if I am to be her husband.’

And Rudy laughed, for he was of good courage, and he strode away towards the mill. He knew what he wanted ; he wanted to have Babette.

The river, with its yellowish bed, foamed along, and the willows and lime trees hung over the hurrying waters ; Rudy strode along the path. But, as the children's song has it :

Nobody was at home to greet him,
Only the house cat came to meet him.

The house cat stood on the step and said 'Miaou', and arched her back ; but Rudy paid no attention to this address. He knocked, but no one heard him, no one opened the door to him. 'Miaou!' said the cat. If Rudy had been still a child, he would have understood her language, and have known that the cat was saying, 'There's nobody at home here!' but now he must fain go over to the mill to make inquiries, and there he heard the news that the miller had gone far away to Interlaken, and Babette with him : a great shooting match was to come off there ; it would begin to-morrow, and last a full week, and people from all the German Cantons were to be present at it.

Poor Rudy ! he might be said to have chosen an unlucky day for his visit to Bex, and now he might go home. He turned about accordingly, and marched over St. Maurice and Sion towards his own valley and the mountains of his home ; but he was not discouraged. When the sun rose next morning his good humour already stood high, for it had never set.

'Babette is at Interlaken, many days' journey from here,' he said to himself. 'It is a long way thither if a man travels along the broad high road, but it is not so far if one takes the short cut across the mountains, and the chamois hunter's path is straight forward. I've been that way already : yonder is my early home, where I lived as a child in grandfather's house, and there's a shooting match at Interlaken. I'll be there too, and be the best shot ; and I'll be with Babette too, when once I have made her acquaintance.'

With a light knapsack containing his Sunday clothes on his back, and his gun and hunting bag across his shoulder,

Rudy mounted the hill by the short cut, which was, nevertheless, tolerably long ; but the shooting match had only begun that day, and was to last a week or more ; and they had told him that the miller and Babette would pass the whole time with their friends at Interlaken. Rudy marched across the Gemmi, intending to descend at Grindelwald.

Fresh and merry, he walked on in the strengthening light mountain air. The valley sank deeper and deeper behind him, and his horizon became more and more extended ; here a snowy peak appeared, and there another, and presently the whole gleaming white chain of the Alps could be seen. Rudy knew every peak, and he made straight towards the Schreckhorn, that raised its white-powdered, stony finger up into the blue air.

At last he had crossed the ridge. The grassy pastures sloped down towards the valley of his old home. The air was light and his spirits were light. Mountain and valley bloomed fair with verdure and with flowers, and his heart was filled with the feeling of youth, that recks not of coming age or of death. To live, to conquer, to enjoy, free as a bird !—and light as a bird he felt. And the swallows flew past him, and sang, as they had sang in his childhood, ‘ We and ye ! we and ye ! ’ and all seemed joy and rapid motion.

Below lay the summer-green meadow, studded with brown wooden houses, with the Lütchine rushing and humming among them. He saw the glacier with the grass-green borders and the clouded snow ; he looked into the deep crevasses, and beheld the upper and the lower glacier. The church bells sounded across to him, as if they were ringing to welcome him into the valley of home ; and his heart beat stronger, and swelled so, that for a moment Babette entirely disappeared, so large did his heart become, and so full of recollections.

He went along again, up on the mountain where he had stood as a child with other little children, offering carved houses for sale. There among the pine trees stood the house of his grandfather ; but strangers inhabited it now. Children came running along the road towards him to sell their wares, and one of them offered him an Alpine rose,

which Rudy looked upon as a good omen, and thought of Babette. Soon he had crossed the bridge where the two branches of the Lütchine join ; the woods became thicker here and the walnut trees gave a friendly shade. Now he saw the waving flags, the flags with the white cross in a red field, the national emblem of the Switzer and the Dane, and Interlaken lay before him.

This was certainly a town without equal, according to Rudy's estimate. It was a little Swiss town in its Sunday dress. It did not look like other places, a heavy mass of stone houses, dismal and pretentious ; no, here the wooden houses looked as if they had run down into the valley from the hills, and placed themselves in a row beside the clear river that ran so gaily by ; they were a little out of order, but nevertheless they formed a kind of street ; and the prettiest of all the streets was one that had grown up since Rudy had been here in his boyish days ; and it looked to him as if it had been built of all the natty little houses his grandfather had carved, and which used to be kept in the cupboard of the old house. A whole row of such houses seemed to have grown up here like strong chestnut trees ; each of them was called an hotel, and had carved work on the windows and doors, and a projecting roof, prettily and tastefully built, and in front of each was a garden separating it from the broad macadamized road. The houses only stood on one side of the road, so that they did not hide the fresh green pastures, in which the cows were walking about with bells round their necks like those which sound upon the lofty Alps. The pasture was surrounded by high mountains, which seemed to have stepped aside in the middle, so that the sparkling snow-covered mountain, the 'Jungfrau', the most beautiful of all the Swiss peaks, could be plainly seen.

What a number of richly dressed ladies and gentlemen from foreign lands ! what a crowd of people from the various Cantons ! Every marksman wore his number displayed in a wreath round his hat. There was music and singing, barrel organs and trumpets, bustle and noise. Houses and bridges were adorned with verses and emblems ; flags and banners were waving ; the rifles cracked merrily now and again ; and in Rudy's ears the sound of the shots

was the sweetest music ; and in the bustle and tumult he had quite forgotten Babette, for whose sake he had come.

And now the marksmen went crowding to shoot at the target. Rudy soon took up his station among them, and proved to be the most skilful and the most fortunate of all—each time his bullet struck the black spot in the centre of the target.

‘Who may that stranger, that young marksman be?’ asked many of the bystanders. ‘He speaks the French they talk in the Canton of Wallis.’

‘He can also make himself well understood in our German,’ said others.

‘They say he lived as a child in the neighbourhood of Grindelwald,’ observed one of the marksmen.

And he was full of life, this stranger youth. His eyes gleamed, and his glance and his arm were sure, and that is why he hit the mark so well. Fortune gives courage, but Rudy had courage enough of his own. He had soon assembled a circle of friends round him, who paid him honour, and showed respect for him ; and Babette was almost forgotten for the moment. Then suddenly a heavy hand clapped him on the shoulder, and a deep voice addressed him in the French tongue :

‘You’re from the Canton of Wallis?’

Rudy turned round, and saw a red good-humoured face, belonging to a portly person. The speaker was the rich miller of Bex ; and his broad body almost eclipsed the pretty delicate Babette, who, however, soon peeped forth from behind him with her bright dark eyes. It pleased the rich miller that a marksman from his Canton should have shot best, and have won respect from all present. Well, Rudy was certainly a fortunate youth, for the person for whose sake he had come, but whom he had forgotten after his arrival, now came to seek him out.

When fellow countrymen meet at a long distance from home, they are certain to converse and to make acquaintance with one another. By virtue of his good shooting, Rudy had become the first at the marksmen’s meeting, just as the miller was the first at home in Bex on the strength of his money and his good mill ; and so the two men shook hands, a thing they had never done before ;

Babette also held out her hand frankly to Rudy, who pressed it so warmly and gave her such an earnest look that she blushed crimson to the roots of her hair.

The miller talked of the long distance they had come, and of the many huge towns they had seen ; according to his idea, they had made quite a long journey of it, having travelled by railway, steamboat, and diligence.

‘ I came the shortest way,’ observed Rudy. ‘ I walked across the mountains. No road is so high but a man may get over it.’

‘ And break his neck,’ quoth the miller. ‘ You look just the fellow to break your neck one of these days, so bold as you are, too.’

‘ Oh, a man does not fall unless he is afraid of falling,’ observed Rudy.

The relatives of the miller in Interlaken, at whose house he and Babette were staying, invited Rudy to visit them, since he belonged to the same Canton as the rich miller. That was a good offer for Rudy. Fortune was favourable to him, as she always is to any one who seeks to win by his own energy, and remembers that ‘ Providence provides us with nuts, but leaves us to crack them ’.

Rudy sat among the miller’s relatives like one of the family. A glass was emptied to the health of the best marksman, and Babette clinked her glass with the rest, and Rudy returned thanks for the toast.

Towards evening they all took a walk on the pretty road by the prosperous hotels under the old walnut trees, and so many people were there, and there was so much pushing, that Rudy was obliged to offer his arm to Babette. He declared he was very glad to have met people from Waud, for Waud and Wallis were good neighbour Cantons. He expressed his joy so heartily, that Babette could not help giving him a grateful pressure of the hand. They walked on together as if they had been old friends, and she talked and chattered away ; and Rudy thought how charmingly she pointed out the ridiculous and absurd points in the costumes and manners of the foreign ladies ; not that she did it to make game of them, for they might be very good honourable people, as Babette well knew, for was not her own godmother one of these grand English ladies ?

Eighteen years ago, when Babette was christened, this lady had been residing in Bex, and had given Babette the costly brooch the girl now wore on her neck. Twice the lady had written, and this year Babette had expected to meet her and her two daughters at Interlaken. 'The daughters were old maids, nearly thirty years old,' added Babette; but then she herself was only eighteen.

The sweet little mouth never rested for a moment; and everything that Babette said, sounded in Rudy's ears like a matter of the utmost importance; and he, on his part, told all he had to tell—how often he had been at Bex, how well he knew the mill, and how often he had seen Babette, though she had probably never noticed him; and how, when he had lately called at the mill, full of thoughts that he could not express, she and her father had been absent—had gone far away, but not so far that a man might not climb over the wall that made the way so long.

He said all that and a great deal more. He said how fond he was of her, and that he had come hither on her account, and not for the sake of the marksmen's meeting.

Babette was quite still while he said all this; it almost seemed to her as if he entrusted her with too great a secret.

And as they wandered on, the sun sank down behind the high rocky wall. The 'Jungfrau' stood there in full beauty and splendour, surrounded by the green wreath of the forest-clad hills. Every one stood still to enjoy the glorious sight, and Rudy and Babette rejoiced in it too.

'It is nowhere more beautiful than here!' said Babette.

'Nowhere!' cried Rudy, and he looked at Babette. 'To-morrow I must return home,' he said, after a silence of a few moments.

'Come and see us at Bex,' whispered Babette; 'it will please my father.'

V

ON THE WAY HOME

Oh, what a load Rudy had to carry when he went homeward across the mountains on the following day! Yes, he had three silver goblets, two handsome rifles, and a silver coffee-pot. The coffee-pot would be useful when he set

up housekeeping. But that was not all he had to carry : he bore something mightier and weightier, or rather it bore him, carrying him homewards across the high mountains. The weather was rough, grey, rainy, and heavy ; the clouds floated down upon the mountain heights like funereal crape, concealing the sparkling summits. From the woodland valleys the last strokes of the axe sounded upward, and down the declivities of the mountains rolled trunks of trees, which looked like thin sticks from above, but were in reality thick enough to serve as masts for the largest ships. The Lüttschine foamed along with its monotonous song, the wind whistled, the clouds sailed onward. Then suddenly a young girl appeared, walking beside Rudy : he had not noticed her till now that she was quite close to him. She wanted, like himself, to cross the mountain. The maiden's eyes had a peculiar power : you were obliged to look at them, and they were strange to behold, clear as glass, and deep, unfathomable.

‘Have you a sweetheart ?’ asked Rudy, for his thoughts all ran on that subject.

‘I have none,’ replied the girl, with a laugh ; but she did not seem to be speaking a true word. ‘Don’t let us make a circuit,’ she said. ‘We must keep more to the left, then the way will be shorter.’

‘Yes, and we shall fall into an ice cleft,’ said Rudy. ‘You want to be a guide, and you don’t know the way better than that !’

‘I know the way well,’ the girl replied, ‘and my thoughts are not wandering. Yours are down in the valley, but up here one ought to think of the Ice Maiden : she does not love the human race—so people say.’

‘I’m not afraid of her,’ cried Rudy. ‘She was obliged to give me up when I was still a child, and I shall not give myself up to her now that I am older.’

And the darkness increased, the rain fell, and the snow came, and dazzled and blinded.

‘Reach me your hand,’ said the girl to Rudy ; ‘I will help you to climb.’

And he felt the touch of her fingers icy cold upon him.

‘You help me !’ cried Rudy. ‘I don’t want a woman’s help to show me how to climb.’

And he went on faster, away from her. The driving snow closed round him like a mantle, the wind whistled, and behind him he heard the girl laughing and singing in a strange way. He felt sure she was a phantom in the service of the Ice Maiden. Rudy had heard tell of such apparitions when he passed the night on the mountains in his boyish days, during his journey from his grandfather's house.

The snow-fall abated, and the cloud was now below him. He looked back, but nobody was to be seen ; but he could hear laughter and whooping that did not seem to proceed from a human voice.

When Rudy at last reached the highest mountain plateau, whence the path led downward into the Rhone valley, he saw in the direction of Chamonix, in a strip of pure blue sky, two bright stars which glittered and twinkled ; and he thought of Babette, of himself, and of his good fortune, and the thought made him quite warm.

VI

THE VISIT TO THE MILL

‘What magnificent things you have brought home !’ exclaimed the old aunt ; and her strange eagle’s eyes flashed, and her thin neck waved to and fro faster than ever in strange contortions. ‘You have luck, Rudy ! I must kiss you, my darling boy !’

And Rudy allowed himself to be kissed, but with an expression in his face which told that he submitted to it as a necessary evil, a little domestic infliction.

‘How handsome you are, Rudy !’ said the old woman.

‘Don’t put nonsense into my head,’ replied Rudy, with a laugh ; but still he was pleased to hear her say it.

‘I repeat it,’ she cried. ‘Good luck attends upon you !’

‘Perhaps you are right,’ he observed ; and he thought of Babette.

Never had he felt such a longing to go down into the deep valley.

‘They must have returned,’ he said to himself. ‘It is

two days beyond the time when they were to have been back. I must go to Bex.'

Accordingly Rudy journeyed to Bex, and the people of the mill were at home. He was well received, and the people at Interlaken had sent a kind message of remembrance to him. Babette did not say much: she had grown very silent, but her eyes spoke, and that was quite enough for Rudy. It seemed as if the miller, who was accustomed to lead the conversation, and who always expected his hearers to laugh at his ideas and jokes because he was the rich miller—it seemed as if he would never tire of hearing Rudy's hunting adventures; and Rudy spoke of the dangers and difficulties the chamois hunters have to encounter on the high mountains, how they have to cling, how they have to clamber over the frail ledges of snow, that are, as it were, glued to the mountain-side by frost and cold, and to clamber across the bridges of snow that stretch across rocky chasms. And the eyes of the brave Rudy flashed while he told of the hunter's life, of the cunning of the chamois and its perilous leaps, of the mighty whirlwind and the rushing avalanches. He noticed clearly enough, that with every fresh narrative he enlisted the miller more and more in his favour; and the old man felt especially interested in what the young hunter told about the vultures and the royal eagles.

Not far off, in the Canton of Wallis, there was an eagle's nest built very cleverly under a steep overhanging rock, and in the nest was an eaglet which could not be captured. An Englishman had a few days before offered Rudy a handful of gold pieces if he could procure him the eaglet alive.

'But there is a limit in all things,' said Rudy: 'that eaglet is not to be taken; it would be folly to make the attempt.'

And the wine flowed and conversation flowed; but the evening appeared far too short for Rudy, although it was past midnight when he set out to go home after his first visit to the mill.

The lights still gleamed for a short time through the windows of the mill among the green trees, and the Parlour Cat came forth from the open loophole in the roof, and met the Kitchen Cat walking along the rain-spout.

‘Do you know the news in the mill?’ asked the Parlour Cat. ‘There’s a silent engagement going on in the house. Father knows nothing about it. Rudy and Babette were treading on each other’s paws under the table all the evening. They trod upon me twice, but I would not mew for fear of exciting attention.’

‘I should have mewed,’ said the Kitchen Cat.

‘What will pass in the kitchen would never do for the parlour,’ retorted the other Cat; ‘but I’m curious to know what the miller will think about it when he hears of the affair.’

Yes, indeed, what would the miller say? That is what Rudy would have liked to know too; and, moreover, he could not bear to remain long in suspense without knowing it. Accordingly, a few days afterwards, when the omnibus rattled across the Rhone bridge between Wallis and Waud, Rudy sat in the vehicle, in good spirits as usual, and already basking in the sunny prospect of the consent he hoped to gain that very evening.

And when the evening came, and the omnibus was making its way back, Rudy once more sat in it as a passenger; but in the mill the Parlour Cat had some important news to tell.

‘Do you know it, you there out of the kitchen? The miller has been told all about it. There was a fine end to it all. Rudy came here towards evening, and he and Babette had much to whisper and to tell each other, standing in the passage outside the miller’s room. I was lying at their feet, but they had neither eyes nor thoughts for me. “I shall go to your father without more ado,” said Rudy; “that’s the honest way to do it.” “Shall I go with you?” asked Babette; “it will give you courage.” “I’ve courage enough,” replied Rudy; “but if you are present he must be kind, whether he likes it or not.” And they went in together. Rudy trod upon my tail most horribly. He’s a very awkward fellow, is Rudy. I called out, but neither he nor Babette had ears to hear me. They opened the door, and both went in, and I went on before them; but I sprang up on the back of a chair, for I could not know where Rudy would kick. But it was the miller who kicked this time, and it was a good

kick too ! out at the door and up to the mountain among the chamois ; and he may take aim at them now, may Rudy, and not at our Babette.'

'But what did they say ?' asked the Kitchen Cat.

'What did they say ? Why, they said everything that people are accustomed to say when they come a-wooing. "I love her and she loves me, and if there 's milk enough in the pail for one, there 's enough for two." "But she 's perched too high for you," said the miller. "She 's perched on grist, on golden grist, as you very well know, and you can't reach up to her." "Nothing is so high that a man can't reach it, if he has the will," said Rudy, for he is a bold fellow. "But you can't reach the eaglet, you said so yourself the other day, and Babette is higher than that." "I shall take both of them," exclaimed Rudy. "I'll give you Babette when you give me the young eaglet alive," said the miller, and he laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks. "But now I must thank you for your visit. Call again to-morrow, and you'll find nobody at home. Good-bye to you, Rudy." And Babette said good-bye too, as pitifully as a little kitten that can't see its mother yet. "Your word is your bond," cried Rudy. "Don't cry, Babette : I'll bring you the eaglet !" "You'll break your neck first, I hope," said the miller, "and then we shall be rid of your dangling here !" That 's what I call a capital kick !

'And now Rudy is gone, and Babette sits and weeps, but the miller sings German songs that he has learned on his late journey. I don't like to be downhearted about it, for that can do no good !'

'Well, after all, there 's some prospect for him still,' observed the Kitchen Cat.

VII

THE EAGLE'S NEST

Down from the rocky path sounded a fresh song, merry and strong, indicating courage and good spirits ; and the singer was Rudy, who came to seek his friend Vesinand.

'You must help me ! We will have Ragli with us. I want to take the eaglet out of the nest on the rock.'

‘Would you not like to take the black spots out of the moon first?’ replied Vesinand. ‘That would be just as easy. You seem to be in a merry mood.’

‘Certainly I am, for I hope to be married soon. But let us speak seriously, and I will tell you what it is all about.’

And soon Vesinand and Ragli knew what Rudy wanted.

‘You’re a headstrong fellow,’ they said. ‘It can’t be done : you will break your neck over it.’

‘A man does not fall who’s not afraid of falling,’ Rudy persisted.

At midnight they set out with poles, ladders, and ropes ; their way led through forest and thicket, over loose rolling stones, ever upward, upward, through the dark night. The water rushed beneath them, water dripped down from above, and heavy clouds careered through the air. The hunters reached the steep wall of rock. Here it was darker than ever. The opposite sides of the chasm almost touched, and the sky could only be seen through a small cleft above them, and around them and beneath them was the great abyss with its foaming waters. The three sat on the rock waiting for the dawn, when the eagle should fly forth, for the old bird must be shot before they could think of capturing the young one. Rudy sat on the ground, as silent as if he were a piece of the stone on which he crouched ; his rifle he held before him ready cocked ; his eyes were fixed on the upper cleft beneath which the eagle’s nest lay concealed against the rock. And a long time those three hunters had to wait !

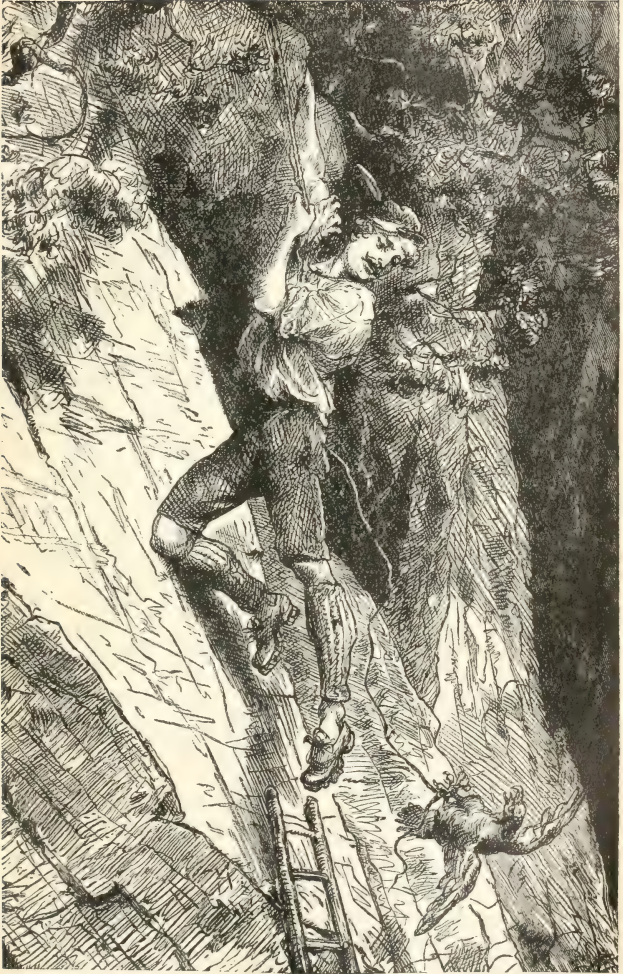
Now there was a rushing, whirring sound above them, and a great soaring object darkened the air. Two guns were pointed, as the black form of the eagle arose from the nest. A shot rang sharply out, for a moment the outstretched wings continued to move, and then the bird sank slowly down, and it seemed with its outstretched wings to fill up the chasm, and threatened to bear down the hunters in its fall. Then the eagle sank down into the abyss, breaking off twigs of trees and bushes in its descent.

And now the hunters began operations. Three of the longest ladders were bound together—those would reach high enough ; they were reared on end on the last firm

foothold on the margin of the abyss ; but they did not reach far enough ; and higher up, where the nest lay concealed under the shelter of the projecting crag, the rock was as smooth as a wall. After a short council the men determined that two ladders should be tied together and let down from above into the cleft, and that these should be attached to the three that had been fastened together below. With great labour the two ladders were dragged up and the rope made fast above ; then the ladders were passed over the margin of the projecting rock, so that they hung dangling above the abyss. Rudy had already taken his place on the lowest step. It was an icy-cold morning ; misty clouds were rising from the dark chasm. Rudy sat as a fly sits on a waving wheat-straw which some nest-building bird has deposited on the edge of a factory chimney ; only the fly can spread its wings and escape if the wheat-straw gives way, while Rudy had nothing for it, in such a case, but to break his neck. The wind whistled about him, and below in the abyss thundered the waters from the melting glacier, the palace of the Ice Maiden.

Now he imparted a swaying motion to the ladders, just as a spider sways itself to and fro, when, hanging at the end of its thread, it wishes to seize upon an object ; and when Rudy for the fourth time touched the top of the ladder, the highest of the three that had been bound together, he seized it and held it firmly. Then he bound the other two ladders with a strong hand to the first three, but they still rattled and swayed as if they had loose hinges.

The five long ladders thus bound together, and standing perpendicularly against the rocky wall, looked like a long swaying reed ; and now came the most dangerous part of the business. There was climbing to be done as the cat climbs ; but Rudy had learned to climb, and it was the Cat who had taught him. He knew nothing of the Spirit of Giddiness who stood treading the air behind him, and stretching out long arms towards him like the feelers of a polypus. Now he stood upon the highest step of the topmost ladder, and perceived that after all it was not high enough to let him look into the nest : he could only reach up into it with his hand. He felt about to test the



firmness of the thick plaited branches that formed the lower part of the nest, and when he had secured a thick steady piece he swung himself up by it from the ladder, and leaned against the branch, so that his head and shoulders were above the level of the nest. A stifling stench of carrion streamed towards him, for in the nest lay chamois, birds, and lambs, in a putrid state. The Spirit of Giddiness, that had no power over him, blew the poisonous vapour into his face, to make him sick and trouble his senses; and below, in the black yawning gulf, on the rushing waters, sat the Ice Maiden herself, with her long whitish-green hair, and stared at him with cold deathlike eyes.

‘Now I shall catch you!’ she thought.

In a corner of the nest he saw the young one, which was not yet fledged, sitting large and stately. Rudy fixed his eyes upon it, held himself fast with all the strength of one hand, while with the other he threw the noose over the young eagle. It was caught—caught alive! Its legs were entangled in the tough noose, and Rudy threw the cord and the bird across his shoulder, so that the creature hung some distance beneath him, while he held fast by a rope they had lowered down to assist him, till his feet touched the topmost round of the ladder.

‘Hold fast! Don’t fancy you’re going to fall, and you won’t fall!’ It was the old maxim, and he followed it; he held fast and climbed, was convinced that he should not fall, and accordingly he did not fall.

And now a whoop resounded, strong and jubilant, and Rudy stood safe and sound on the firm rock with the captured eagle.

VIII

WHAT NEWS THE PARLOUR CAT HAD TO TELL

‘Here is what you wished for!’ said Rudy, as he entered the house of the miller at Bex.

He set down a great basket on the ground, and lifted the cloth that covered it. Two yellow eyes bordered with black stared forth; they seemed to shoot forth sparks, and gleamed burning and savage, as if they would burn

and bite all they looked at. The short strong beak was open, ready to snap, and the neck was red and downy.

‘The young eagle!’ cried the miller.

Babette screamed aloud and started back, but she could not turn her eyes from Rudy or from the eagle.

‘You’re not to be frightened off,’ observed the miller.

‘And you always keep your word,’ answered Rudy. ‘Every man has his own character.’

‘But why did you not break your neck?’ asked the miller.

‘Because I held fast,’ replied Rudy; ‘and I do that still. I hold Babette fast!’

‘First see that you get her,’ said the miller; and he laughed. But his laughter was a good sign, and Babette knew it.

‘We must have him out of the basket; his staring is enough to drive one mad. But how did you contrive to get at him?’

And Rudy had to relate the adventure, at which the miller opened his eyes wider and wider.

‘With your courage and good fortune you may gain a living for three wives,’ cried the miller at last.

‘Thank you!’ said Rudy.

‘Still, you have not Babette yet,’ continued the miller; and he slapped the young huntsman playfully on the shoulder.

‘Do you know the latest news from the mill?’ the Parlour Cat inquired of the Kitchen Cat. ‘Rudy has brought us the eaglet, and is going to take Babette away in exchange. They have kissed each other, and let the old man see it. That’s as good as a betrothal. The old man didn’t kick; he drew in his claws, and took his nap, and let the two young ones sit together and purr. They’ve so much to tell each other that they won’t have done till Christmas.’

And they had not done till Christmas. The wind tossed up the brown leaves; the snow whirled through the valley and over the high mountains; the Ice Maiden sat in her proud castle, which increases in size during the winter; the rocky walls were covered with a coating of ice, and icicles thick as pine trunks and heavy as elephants hung

down, where in the summer the mountain stream spread its misty veil; garlands of ice of whimsical forms hung sparkling on the snow-powdered fir trees. The Ice Maiden rode on the rushing wind over the deepest valleys. The snowy covering reached almost down to Bex, and the Ice Maiden came thither also, and saw Rudy sitting in the mill: this winter he sat much more indoors than was his custom—he sat by Babette. The wedding was to be next summer; their ears often buzzed, their friends spoke so much about it. In the mill there was sunshine—the loveliest Alpine rose bloomed there, the cheerful smiling Babette, beautiful as the spring, the spring that makes all the birds sing of summer and of marriage feasts.

‘How those two are always sitting together—close together!’ said the Parlour Cat. ‘I’ve heard enough of their mewling.’

IX

THE ICE MAIDEN

Spring had unfolded its fresh green garland on the walnut and chestnut trees extending from the bridge at St. Maurice to the shore of the Lake of Geneva, along the Rhone that rushes along with headlong speed from its source beneath the green glacier, the ice palace where the Ice Maiden dwells, and whence she soars on the sharp wind up to the loftiest snow-field, there to rest upon her snowy couch: there she sat, and gazed with far-seeing glance into the deep valleys, where the men ran busily to and fro, like ants on the stone that glitters in the sun.

‘Ye spirit powers, as the Children of the Sun call you,’ said the Ice Maiden, ‘ye are but worms. Let a snowball roll from the mountain, and you and your houses and towns are crushed and swept away!’

And higher she lifted her haughty head, and gazed out far and wide with deadly flashing eyes.

But from the valley there arose a rumbling sound. They were blasting the rocks. Human work was going on. Roads and tunnels for railways were being constructed.

‘They’re playing like moles!’ she said. ‘They’re digging passages under the earth, and thence come these

sounds like the firing of guns. When I remove one of my castles, it sounds louder than the thunder's roar.'

Out of the valley rose a smoke which moved forward like a fluttering veil: it was the waving steam plume of the engine, which on the lately opened road dragged the train, the curling snake, each of whose joints is a carriage. Away it shot, swift as an arrow.

'They're playing at being masters down yonder, the spirit powers,' said the Ice Maiden, 'but the power of the forces of nature is greater than theirs.'

And she laughed and sang till the valley echoed.

'Yonder rolls an avalanche!' said the people.

But the Children of the Sun sang louder still of HUMAN THOUGHT, the powerful agent that places barriers against the sea, and levels mountains, and fills up valleys—of human thought, that is master of the powers of nature. And at this time there marched across the snow-field where the Ice Maiden rules, a company of travellers. The men had bound themselves to one another with ropes, that they might, as it were, form a heavier body here on the slippery surface of ice on the margin of the deep chasms.

'Insects that you are!' cried the Ice Maiden. '*You* the rulers of the powers of nature!'

And she turned away from the company, and looked contemptuously down into the deep valley, where the long train of carriages was rushing along.

'There they sit, those thoughts! there they sit, in the power of the forces of nature! I see them, each and all of them! One of them sits alone, proud as a King, and yonder they sit in a crowd. Half of them are asleep. And when the steam dragon stops, they alight and go their ways. The thoughts go abroad into the world.'

And she laughed again.

'There rolls another avalanche!' said the people in the valley.

'It will not reach us,' said two who sat behind the steam dragon. 'Two hearts that beat like one,' as the song has it. These two were Babette and Rudy; and the miller was with them too.

'I go as baggage!' he said. 'I am here as a necessary appendage.'

‘There those two sit,’ said the Ice Maiden. ‘Many a chamois have I crushed, millions of Alpine roses have I broken to pieces, not even sparing the roots. I’ll wipe them out, these thoughts—these spirit powers.’

And she laughed again.

‘There rolls another avalanche!’ said the people in the valley below.

X

BABETTE’S GODMOTHER

At Montreux, the first of the towns which with Clarens, Vernex, and Crin form a garland round the north-eastern portion of the Lake of Geneva, lived Babette’s godmother, a high-born English lady, with her daughters and a young male relative. They had only lately arrived, but the miller had already waited upon them to tell them of Babette’s betrothal, and the story of Rudy and the eaglet, and of his visit to Interlaken—in short, the whole story. And the visitors were much pleased to hear it, and showed themselves very friendly towards Rudy, Babette, and the miller, who were all three urgently invited to come and see them, and came accordingly. Babette was to see her godmother, and the lady to make acquaintance with Babette.

By the little town of Villeneuve, at the extremity of the Lake of Geneva, lay the steamship which in a half-hour’s trip goes from there to Vernex just below Montreux. The coast here has been sung by poets; here, under the walnut trees, by the deep bluish-green lake, sat Byron, and wrote his melodious verses of the prisoner in the gloomy rocky fortress of Chillon. Yonder, where the weeping willows of Clarens are clearly mirrored in the water, Rousseau wandered, dreaming of Héloïse. The Rhone rolls onward among the lofty snow-clad mountains of Savoy: here, not far from its mouth, lies in the lake a little island, so small that seen from the coast it appears like a ship upon the waters. It is a rock which, about a century ago, a lady caused to be walled round with stone and coated with earth, wherein three acacia trees were planted, which now overshadow the whole island.

Babette was quite delighted with this spot, which seemed to her the prettiest point of all their journey, and she declared that they must land, for it must be charming there. But the steamer glided past, and was moored, according to custom, at Vernex.

The little party wandered from here among the white sunny walls which surround the vineyards of Montreux, where the fig tree casts its shadow over the peasants' huts, and laurels and cypresses grow in the gardens. Half-way up the hill was situated the hotel in which the English lady was staying.

The reception was very hearty. The English lady was very friendly, with a round smiling face : in her childhood her head must have been like one of Raphael's angels ; but she had an old angel's head now, surrounded by curls of silvery white. The daughters were tall, slender, good-looking, lady-like girls. The young cousin whom they had brought with them was dressed in white from head to foot. He had yellow hair, and enough of yellow whisker to have been shared among three or four gentlemen. He immediately showed the very greatest attention to Babette.

Richly bound volumes, music-books, and drawings lay strewn about upon the large table ; the balcony door stood open, and they could look out upon the beautiful far-spreading lake, which lay so shining and still that the mountains of Savoy, with their towns, forests, and snowy peaks, were most accurately reproduced on its surface.

Rudy, who was generally frank, cheerful, and ready, felt very uncomfortable here, and he moved as if he were walking on peas spread over a smooth surface. How long and wearisome the time seemed to him ! He could have fancied himself on a treadmill ! And now they even went out to walk together ; that was just as slow and wearisome as the rest. Rudy might have taken one step backward to every two he made forward, and yet have kept up with the others. They went down to Chillon, the old gloomy castle on the rocky island, to see the instruments of torture, the deadly dungeons, the rusty chains fastened to the walls, the stone benches on which men condemned to death had

sat, the trap-door through which the unhappy wretches were hurled down to be impaled below upon tipped iron stakes in the water. They called it a pleasure to see all this. It was a place of execution that had been lifted by Byron's song into the domain of poetry. Rudy only associated the prison feeling with it. He leaned against one of the great stone window-frames, and looked out into the deep bluish-green water and over at the little island with the three acacias; thither he wished himself transported, to be free from the whole chattering company. But Babette was in unusually good spirits. She declared she had enjoyed herself immensely, and told Rudy she considered the young cousin a complete gentleman.

'A complete booby!' cried Rudy.

And it was the first time he had said anything she did not like. The Englishman had given her a little book in remembrance of Chillon. It was Byron's poem, 'The Prisoner of Chillon,' translated into French, so that Babette could read it.

'The book may be good,' said Rudy, 'but I don't like the combed and curled fellow who gave it you.'

'He looked to me like a flour-sack without any flour,' said the miller; and he laughed at his own joke.

Rudy laughed too, and said that was just his own opinion.

XI

THE COUSIN

A few days after these events, when Rudy went to pay a visit at the mill, he found the young Englishman there, and Babette was just about to offer her visitor some boiled trout—which she certainly must have decorated with parsley with her own hands, so tempting did they look,—a thing that was not at all necessary. What did the Englishman want here? And what business had Babette to treat him and pet him? Rudy was jealous; and that pleased Babette, for she liked to become acquainted with all the points of his character, the weak as well as the strong. Love was still only a game to her, and she played

with Rudy's whole heart ; yet he was, we must confess, her happiness, her whole life, her constant thought, the best and most precious possession she had on earth ; but, for all that, the darker his glance became, the more did her eyes laugh, and she would have liked to kiss the fair Englishman with the yellow beard, if her doing this would have made Rudy wild and sent him raging away ; for that would show how much he loved her. Now, this was not right of Babette ; but she was only nineteen years old. She did not think much, and least of all did she think that her conduct might be misinterpreted by the young Englishman into something very unworthy of the respectable affianced miller's daughter.

The mill stood just where the high road from Bex leads down under the snow-covered mountain height, which in the language of the country is called ' Diablerets '. It was not far from a rushing mountain stream, whose waters were whitish-grey, like foaming soapsuds : it was not this stream that worked the mill ; a smaller stream drove round the great wheel—one which fell from the rock some way beyond the main river, and whose power and fall were increased by a stone dam, and by a long wooden trough, which carried it over the level of the great stream. This trough was so full that the water poured over its margin ; this wooden margin offered a narrow slippery path for those who chose to walk along it, that they might get to the mill by the shortest cut ; and to whom, of all people, should the idea of reaching the mill by this road occur, but to the young Englishman ! Dressed in white, like a miller's man, he climbed over at night, guided by the light that shone from Babette's chamber window ; but he had not learned how to climb like Rudy, and consequently was near upon falling headlong into the stream below, but he escaped with a pair of wet coat-sleeves and soiled trousers ; and thus, wet and bespattered with mud, he came below Babette's window. Here he climbed into the old elm tree, and began to imitate the voice of the owl, the only bird whose cry he could manage. Babette heard the noise, and looked out of her window through the thin curtain ; but when she saw the white form, and conjectured who it was, her heart beat with fear and with anger also. She

put out the light in a hurry, saw that all the bolts of the windows were well secured, and then let him whoop and tu-whoop to his heart's content.

It would be dreadful if Rudy were in the mill just now ! But Rudy was not in the mill ; no—what was worse still, he stood just under the elm tree. Presently there were loud and angry voices, and there might be a fight there, and even murder. Babette opened the window in a fright, and called Rudy by name, begging him to go, and declaring that she would not allow him to remain.

‘ You won’t allow me to remain ? ’ he shouted. ‘ Then it’s a planned thing ! You expect good friends, better men than I ! For shame, Babette ! ’

‘ You are odious ! ’ cried Babette. ‘ I hate you ! Go, go ! ’

‘ I have not deserved this,’ he said, and went away, his face burning like fire, and his heart burning as fiercely.

Babette threw herself on her bed and wept.

‘ So dearly as I love you, Rudy ! And that you should think evil of me ! ’

Then she broke out in anger ; and that was good for her, for otherwise she would have suffered too much from her grief ; and now she could sleep—could sleep the strengthening sleep of health and youth.

XII

EVIL POWERS

Rudy quitted Bex and took the way towards his home ; he went up the mountain, into the fresh cool air, where the snow lay on the ground, where the Ice Maiden ruled. The leafy trees stood far below him and looked like field plants ; the pines and bushes all looked tiny from here ; the Alpine roses grew beside the snow, that lay in long patches like linen lying to bleach. A blue gentian that stood by his path he crushed with a blow of his rifle-stock.

Higher up still two chamois came in view. Rudy’s eyes brightened and his thoughts took a new direction ; but he was not near enough to be sure of his aim, so he mounted

higher, where nothing but scanty grass grew among the blocks of stone. The chamois were straying quietly along on the snow-field. He hastened his steps till the veil of clouds began to encompass him, and suddenly he found himself in front of a steep wall of rock ; and now the rain began to pour down.

He felt a burning thirst, his head was hot, his limbs were cold. He took his hunting flask, but it was empty—he had not thought of filling it when he rushed out upon the mountains. He had never been ill in his life, but now he had warnings of such a condition, for he was weary, and had an inclination to lie down, a longing to go to sleep, though the rain was pouring all around. He tried to collect his faculties, but all objects danced and trembled strangely before his eyes. Then suddenly he beheld what he had never seen in that spot before—a new low-browed house, that leaned against the rock. At the door stood a young girl, and she almost appeared to him like the schoolmaster's daughter Annette, whom he had once kissed at the dance ; but it was not Annette, though he felt certain he had seen this girl before ; perhaps at Grindelwald on that evening when he returned from the marks-men's feast at Interlaken.

‘ Whence do you come ? ’ he asked.

‘ I am at home here. I am keeping my flock,’ was the reply.

‘ Your flock ! Where does it graze ? Here there is only snow and rocks.’

‘ Much you know about what is here,’ retorted the girl, with a laugh. ‘ Behind us, lower down, is a glorious pasture : my goats graze there. I tend them carefully. Not one of them do I lose, and what is once mine remains mine.’

‘ You are bold,’ said Rudy.

‘ And you too,’ replied the girl.

‘ If you have any milk in the house, pray give me some to drink ; I am insufferably thirsty.’

‘ I’ve something better than milk,’ said the girl, ‘ and I will give you that. Yesterday some travellers were here with their guide, who forgot a bottle of wine of a kind you have probably never tasted. They will not come back

to take it away, and I do not drink it, therefore you must drink it.'

And the girl brought the wine, and poured it into a wooden cup, which she gave to Rudy.

'That is good wine,' said he. 'I've never tasted any so strong or so fiery!'

And his eyes glistened, and a glowing, lifelike feeling streamed through him, as if every care, every pressure, had melted into air, and the fresh bubbling human nature stirred within him.

'Why, this must be Annette!' he cried. 'Give me a kiss.'

'Then give me the beautiful ring that you wear on your finger.'

'My betrothal ring?'

'Yes, that very one,' said the girl.

And again she poured wine in the cup, and she put it to his lips, and he drank. The joy of life streamed into his blood: the whole world seemed to be his, and why should he mourn? Everything is made for us to enjoy, that it may make us happy. The stream of life is the stream of enjoyment, and to be carried along by it is happiness. He looked at the young girl—it was Annette, and yet not Annette; still less did it seem like the phantom, the goblin as he called it, which had met him at Grindelwald. The girl here on the mountain looked fresh as the white snow, blooming as an Alpine rose, and swift-footed as a kid; but still she looked as much a mortal as Rudy himself. And he looked in her wonderfully clear eyes, only for a moment he looked into them, and—who shall describe it?—in that moment, whether it was the life of the spirit or death that filled him, he was borne upward, or else he sank into the deep and deadly ice cleft, lower and lower. He saw the icy walls gleaming like blue-green glass, fathomless abysses yawned around, and the water dropped tinkling down like shining bells, clear as pearls, glowing with pale blue flames. The Ice Maiden kissed him—a kiss which sent a shudder from neck to brow; a cry of pain escaped from him; he tore himself away, staggered, and—it was night before his eyes; but soon he opened them again. Evil powers had been playing their sport with him.

Vanished was the Alpine girl, vanished the sheltering hut ; the water poured down the naked rocky wall, and snow lay all around. Rudy trembled with cold : he was wet to the skin, and his ring was gone—the betrothal ring which Babette had given him. His rifle lay near him in the snow : he took it up and tried to fire it, but it missed. Damp clouds hovered like masses of snow over the abyss, and Giddiness was there, lying in wait for the powerless prey ; and below, in the deep abyss, there was a sound as if a block of stone were falling, crushing in its descent everything that tried to arrest its progress.

But Babette sat in the mill and wept. Rudy had not been there for six days—he who was in the wrong, and who ought to come and beg her pardon, and whom she loved with her whole heart.

XIII

IN THE MILL

‘What a strange thing it is with those people!’ said the Parlour Cat to the Kitchen Cat. ‘They’re parted now, Babette and Rudy. She’s weeping ; and he, I suppose, does not think any more about her.’

‘I don’t like that,’ said the Kitchen Cat.

‘Nor do I,’ observed the Parlour Cat ; ‘but I won’t take it to heart. Babette may betroth herself to the red-beard. But he has not been here either since that night when he wanted to climb on the roof.’

Evil powers sport with us and in us : Rudy had experienced that, and had thought much of it. What was all that which had happened to him and around him on the summit of the mountain ? Were they spirits he had seen, or had he had a feverish vision ? Never until now had he suffered from fever or any other illness. But in judging Babette, he had looked into his own heart also. He had traced the wild whirlwind, the hot wind that had raged there. Would he be able to confess to Babette every thought he had had—thoughts that might become actions in the hour of temptation ? He had lost her ring, and through this loss she had won him again. Would she be

able to confess to him? He felt as if his heart would burst when he thought of her. What a number of recollections arose within him! He saw her, as if she were standing bodily before him, laughing like a wayward child. Many a sweet word she had spoken out of the fullness of her heart now crept into his breast like a sunbeam, and soon there was nothing but sunshine within him when he thought of Babette.

Yes, she would be able to confess to him, and she should do so. Accordingly he went to the mill, and the confession began with a kiss, and ended in the fact that Rudy was declared to be the sinner. His great fault had been that he had doubted Babette's fidelity—it was quite wicked of him. Such distrust, such headlong anger, might bring sorrow upon them both. Yes, certainly they could; and accordingly Babette read him a short lecture, to her own great contentment, and with charming grace. But in one point she agreed with Rudy: the nephew of her godmother was a booby, and she would burn the book he had given her, for she would not keep the slightest thing that reminded her of him.

‘That’s all past and gone,’ said the Parlour Cat. ‘Rudy is here again, and they understand one another, and that’s the greatest happiness, they say.’

‘I heard from the rats last night,’ observed the Kitchen Cat, ‘that the greatest happiness was to eat tallow candles and to have plenty of rancid bacon. Now, whom is one to believe, the rats or the lovers?’

‘Neither,’ said the Parlour Cat; ‘that’s always the safest way.’

The greatest happiness of Rudy and Babette—the fairest day, as they called it—the wedding day, now approached rapidly.

But the wedding was not to be celebrated at the church at Bex and in the mill. Babette's godmother wished her godchild to be married from her house, and the service was to be read in the beautiful little church at Montreux. The miller insisted upon having his way in this matter. He alone knew what were the English lady's intentions with respect to her godchild, and declared that the lady intended making such a wedding present that they were

bound to show some sense of obligation. The day was fixed. On the evening before it, they were to travel to Villeneuve, so that they might drive over early to Montreux, that the young English ladies might dress the bride.

‘I suppose there will be a wedding feast here in the house?’ said the Parlour Cat: ‘if not, I wouldn’t give a mew for the whole affair.’

‘Of course there will be a feast here,’ replied the Kitchen Cat. ‘Ducks and pigeons have been killed, and a whole buck is hanging against the wall. My mouth waters when I think of it. To-morrow the journey will begin.’

Yes, to-morrow. And on this evening Rudy and Babette sat for the last time together in the mill as a betrothed pair.

Without, the Alps were glowing, the evening bells sounded, and the Daughters of the Sunbeams sang, ‘Let that happen which is best.’

XIV

VISIONS OF THE NIGHT

The sun had gone down and the clouds lowered among the high mountains in the Rhone valley; the wind blew from the south—a wind from Africa was passing over the lofty Alps, a whirlwind that tore the clouds asunder; and when it had passed by, all was still for a moment; the rent clouds hung in fantastic forms among the forest-clad mountains and over the hurrying Rhone; they hung in shapes like those of the sea monsters of the primaeval world, like the soaring eagles of the air, like the leaping frogs of the marshes; they came down towards the rushing stream, sailing upon it, and yet suspended in air. The river carried down with it an uprooted pine tree, and bubbling eddies rushed on in front of the mass; they were Spirits of Giddiness, more than one of them, that whirled along over the foaming stream. The moon lit up the snow on the mountain-tops, the dark woods, and the wonderful white clouds—the nightly visions, the spirits of the powers of nature. The dwellers in the mountains saw them through the window-panes sailing on in troops in front of the Ice Maiden, who came out of her glacier palace, and sat on

the frail ship, the uprooted pine tree : she was carried by the glacier water down the river into the open sea .

‘ The wedding guests are coming ! ’ she said ; and she sang the news to the air and to the water .

Visions without, visions within. Babette was dreaming a wonderful dream.

It seemed to her as if she were married to Rudy, and had been his wife for many years. He was absent, chamois hunting, but she was sitting at home in her dwelling, and the young Englishman, he with the yellow beard, was sitting by her. His eyes were so eloquent, his words had such magic power, that when he stretched out his hand to her, she was forced to follow him. They went away together from her home. On they went, ever downwards ; and it seemed to Babette as though there lay on her heart a weight that grew heavier and heavier, and this weight was a sin against Heaven and a sin against Rudy. And suddenly she stood forsaken, and her dress was torn by the thorns, and her head had turned grey : she looked upwards in her misery, and on the edge of the rock she caught sight of Rudy : she stretched out her arms to him, but did not dare to call or to beseech him to help her ; and, indeed, that would have availed her nothing, for soon she saw that it was not he, but only his hunting coat and his hat, hanging up on the alpenstock in the fashion adopted by the hunters to deceive the chamois. And in her boundless agony Babette moaned out,

‘ Oh that I had died on my wedding day, the happiest day of my life ! That would have been a mercy, a great happiness ! Then all would have happened for the best ! the best that could happen to me and to Rudy ; for no one knows what the future will bring ! ’

And in her God-forsaken despair she threw herself into the abyss, and a string seemed to burst, and a sorrowful note resounded through the mountains !

Babette awoke : the dream was past and effaced from her mind, but she knew that she had dreamed something terrible, and that it was about the young Englishman, whom she had not seen, whom she had not even thought of, for months past. Could he be in Montreux ? Should she see him at her wedding ? A light shade passed over

her delicate mouth and her eyebrows contracted to a frown, but soon there was a smile on her lips and beams of gladness shot from her eyes ; for, without, the sun was shining brightly, and it was morning, and she was to be married to Rudy.

Rudy was already in the sitting-room when she entered it, and now they started for Villeneuve. They were both supremely happy, and so was the miller likewise. He laughed, and his face beamed with good humour. A kind father he was, and an honest man.

‘Now we are the masters of the house !’ said the Parlour Cat.

XV

CONCLUSION

It was not yet evening when the three happy people entered Villeneuve, where they dined. Thereupon the miller sat in the arm-chair, smoked his pipe, and took a short nap. The betrothed pair went arm in arm out of the town : they walked along the road, under the green-clad rocks, beside the deep blue-green lake ; the grey walls and heavy towers of gloomy Chillon were mirrored in the clear flood ; the little island of the three acacias lay still nearer to them, looking like a nosegay in the lake.

‘It must be charming there !’ said Babette.

She felt the greatest desire to go there ; and this wish might be immediately fulfilled, for by the shore lay a boat, and it was an easy matter to loosen the rope by which it was fastened. No one was to be seen of whom permission could be asked, and so they borrowed the boat without ceremony, for Rudy was an expert rower.

The oars cut like fins into the yielding water—the water that is so pliant and yet so strong—that has a back to bear burdens and a mouth to devour—that can smile, the very picture of mildness, and yet can terrify and crush. The water glistened in the wake of the boat, which in a few minutes had carried the two over to the island, where they stepped ashore. There was not more room on the spot than two persons would require for a dance.

Rudy danced round it twice or thrice with Babette ; then they sat down, hand in hand, upon the bench under the drooping acacias, looked into each other's eyes ; and everything glowed in the radiance of the setting sun. The pine woods on the mountains were bathed in a lilac tint, like that of the blooming heather ; and where the trees ended and the naked rock was shown, it glowed as if the stone had been transparent ; the clouds in the sky were like red fire, and the whole lake lay like a fresh blushing rose leaf. Gradually the shadows crept up the snow-covered mountains of Savoy, painting them blue-black ; but the highest summit gleamed like red lava, and seemed to give a picture from the early history of the mountains' formation, when these masses rose glowing from the depths of the earth and had not yet cooled. Rudy and Babette declared they had never yet beheld such a sunset in the Alps. The snow-covered Dent du Midi was tipped with a radiance like that of the full moon when she first rises above the horizon.

‘ So much beauty ! So much happiness ! ’ they both exclaimed.

‘ This earth has nothing more to give,’ said Rudy. ‘ An evening like this seems to comprise a whole life ! How often have I felt my happiness as I feel it now, and have thought, “ If everything were to end this moment, how happily I should have lived ! How glorious is this world ! ” And then the day would end, and another began, and the new day seemed more beautiful to me than the last ! How immeasurably good is God, Babette ! ’

‘ I am happy from the very depth of my heart ! ’ she said.

‘ This earth can offer me nothing more,’ said Rudy.

And the evening bells began to sound from the mountains of Savoy and from the Swiss hills, and in the west rose the black Jura range, crowned with a wreath of gold.

‘ May Heaven grant to thee what is happiest and best ! ’ murmured Babette.

‘ It will,’ replied Rudy. ‘ To-morrow I shall have it. To-morrow you will be mine entirely. My own sweet wife ! ’

‘The boat!’ exclaimed Babette, suddenly.

The little skiff in which they were to return had broken loose and was drifting away from the island.

‘I will bring it back,’ said Rudy.

And he threw aside his coat, pulled off his boots, jumped into the lake, and swam with powerful strokes towards the boat.

Cold and deep was the clear blue-green ice water from the glacier of the mountain. Rudy looked down into its depths—one glance—and it seemed to him that he saw a golden ring, rolling, shining, sparkling: he thought of his ring of betrothal—and the ring grew larger, and widened into a sparkling circle into which the gleaming glacier shone: deep abysses yawned around, and the water-drops rang like the chiming of bells, and glittered with white flames. In a moment he beheld all this that it has taken many words to describe. Young hunters and young girls, men and women who had at different times sunk down into the crevasses among the glaciers, stood here living, with smiling mouths, and deep below them sounded the church bells of sunken cities. The congregation knelt beneath the church roof, the organ pipes were formed of great icicles, and beneath all the Ice Maiden sat on the clear transparent ground. She raised herself towards Rudy and kissed his feet; then a cold death-like numbness poured through his limbs, and an electric shock—ice and fire mingled! There is no difference to be felt between a sudden touch of these two.

‘Mine! mine!’ sounded around him and within him. ‘I kissed thee when thou wert little, kissed thee on thy mouth. Now I kiss thy feet, and thou art mine altogether!’

And he disappeared beneath the clear blue water.

All was silent; the chime of the church bells ceased, the last echoes died away with the last ruddy tints of the evening clouds.

‘Thou art mine!’ sounded from the depths. ‘Thou art mine!’ sounded from the heights, from the regions of the Infinite.

Glorious! from love to love—to fly from earth to heaven!

A chord broke, a sound of mourning was heard; the icy

kiss of Death conquered that which was to pass away ; the prologue ended that the true drama of life might begin, and discord was blended into harmony.

Do you call that a sorrowful story ?

But poor Babette. Her anguish was unspeakable. The boat drifted farther and farther away. No one on the mainland knew that the betrothed pair had gone over to the little island. The sun went down and it became dark. She stood alone, weeping—despairing. A storm came on : flash after flash lit up the Jura mountains, Switzerland and Savoy ; flash upon flash on all sides, the rolling thunder-clap mingling with clap for minutes together. The gleams of lightning were sometimes bright as the sun, showing every separate vine as at noonday, and the next moment all would be shrouded in darkness. The flashes were forked, ring-shaped, wavy ; they darted into the lake and glittered on every side, while the rolling of the thunder was redoubled by the echo. On the mainland, people drew the boats high up on the shore ; everything that had life hastened to get under shelter ; and now the rain came pouring down.

‘ Where can Rudy and Babette be in this tempest ? ’ said the miller.

Babette sat with folded hands, her head on her knees, speechless with grief ; she no longer moaned or wept.

‘ In the deep waters ! ’ was the one thought in her mind. ‘ He is far down in the lakes as if under the glacier.’

And then arose in her the remembrance of what Rudy had told concerning the death of his mother and his own rescue ; how he had been borne forth, like a corpse, from the depths of the glacier.

‘ The Ice Maiden has got him again ! ’

And a flash of lightning glared like sunshine over the white snow. Babette started up. The whole lake was at this moment like a shining glacier ; and there stood the Ice Maiden, majestic, with a bluish-white light upon her, and at her feet lay Rudy’s corpse.

‘ Mine ! ’ she said.

And again there was darkness all around, and the crash of falling waters.

‘ How cruel ! ’ groaned Babette. ‘ Why must he die

when the day of our happiness was about to dawn ? O Lord, enlighten my understanding ! Send Thy light into my heart ! I understand not Thy ways. I grope in darkness, amid the behests of Thy power and Thy wisdom ! ’

And the light for which she prayed was given to her. A gleam of thought, a ray of light, her dream of the past night in its living reality, flashed through her. She remembered the words, the wish she had uttered, concerning what would be ‘THE BEST’ for her and for Rudy.

‘Woe is me ! Was it the germ of sin within my heart ? Was my dream a vision of a future life, whose strings must be snapped asunder that I might be saved ? Wretched that I am ! ’

And she sat there in the dark night, lamenting. Through the thick darkness Rudy’s words seemed to sound, the last words he had spoken on earth, ‘The earth has nothing more to give me ! ’ They had sounded in the fullness of joy ; they echoed now through the depths of distress.

And years have flown by since that time. The lake smiles and its shores smile ; the grape-vine is covered with swelling branches ; steamboats with waving flags glide along ; pleasure-boats with full sails flit across the mirror of waters like white butterflies ; the railway has been opened past Chillon, and leads deep into the valley of the Rhone. At every station strangers alight, with red-bound guide-books in their hands, and they read of the sights they have come to see. They visit Chillon, and in the lake they behold the little island with three acacias, and in the book they read about the betrothed pair who, on an evening of the year 1856, sailed across thither, and of the death of the bridegroom, and how the despairing cries of the bride were not heard on the shore till the next morning.

But the guide-book has nothing to tell concerning the quiet life of Babette in her father’s house—not in the mill, for other people live there now, but in the beautiful house near the station, from whose windows she looks on many an evening across over the chestnut trees towards the snowy mountains on which Rudy once wandered ; in

the evening she marks the Alpine glow—the Children of the Sun recline on the lofty mountains, and renew the song of the wanderer whose cloak the whirlwind once tore away, taking the garment but not the man.

There is a rosy gleam on the snow of the mountains, a rosy gleam in every heart in which dwells the thought, ‘God lets that happen which is best for us!’ But the cause is not always revealed to us, as it was revealed to Babette in her dream.

THE PORTER’S SON

THE General’s family lived on the first floor ; the Porter’s lived in the cellar ; there was a great distance between the two families—the whole of the ground-floor, and the difference in rank ; but they lived under the same roof, and had the same outlook to the street and the yard. In the yard there was a grass-plot with a flowering acacia tree—when it *did* flower ; and under it sat sometimes the smartly-dressed nurse, with the still more smartly-dressed child, the General’s, ‘Little Emily.’ Before them the Porter’s little boy, with the brown eyes and dark hair, used to dance on his bare feet, and the child laughed, and stretched out her little hands to him, and when the General saw it from his window, he nodded down to them, and said, ‘Charming !’ The General’s lady, who was so young that she could almost have been his daughter by an earlier marriage, never looked out to the yard, but had given orders that the cellar-folks’ little boy might play for the child, but must not touch it. The nurse kept strictly to the lady’s orders.

And the sun shone in upon the people in the first floor, and upon those in the cellar ; the acacia tree put forth its blossoms, they fell off, and new ones came again next year ; the tree bloomed, and the Porter’s little boy bloomed, he looked like a fresh tulip. The General’s daughter grew delicate and pale, like the pink leaf of the acacia flower. She seldom came down now under the tree ; she took her

fresh air in the carriage. She drove out with Mamma, and she always nodded to the Porter's little George, even kissed her fingers to him, until her mother told her that she was now too big for that.

One forenoon he went up to the General's with the letters and papers which had been left in the Porter's lodge in the morning. As he went upstairs, past the door of the sand-hole, he heard something whimpering inside ;



he thought it was a chicken chirping there, but instead it was the General's little daughter in muslin and lace.

‘Don’t tell Papa and Mamma, for they will be angry!’

‘What is the matter, little miss?’ asked George.

‘It is all burning!’ said she. ‘It is burning and blazing!’

George opened the door to the little nursery: the window curtain was almost all burned, the curtain rod was glowing and in flames. George sprang up, pulled it down, and called to the people. But for him there would have been a house on fire. The General and his lady questioned little Emily. ‘I only took one single match,’ said she, ‘that burned at once, and the curtain burned at once. I spat to put it out, I spat as hard as I could,

but I could not spit enough, and so I ran out and hid myself, for Papa and Mamma would be so angry.' 'Spit!' said the General, 'what kind of a word is that? When did you hear Papa or Mamma say "spit"? You have got that from downstairs.'

But little George got a penny. This did not go to the baker, it went into the savings box; and soon there were so many shillings, that he could buy himself a paint-box to paint his drawings; and of these he had many. They seemed to come out of his pencil and his finger-ends. He presented his first paintings to little Emily.

'Charming!' said the General; the lady herself admitted that one could distinctly see what the little one had meant. 'He has Genius!' These were the words that the Porter's wife brought down into the cellar.

The General and his wife were people of rank: they had two coats of arms on their carriage; one for each of them. The lady had hers on every piece of clothing, outside and inside, on her night-cap, and night-dress bag. Hers was an expensive one, bought by her father for shining dollars; for he had not been born with it, nor she either; she had come too early, seven years before the coat of arms. Most people could remember that, but not the family. The General's coat of arms was old and big: it might well make one's bones crack to carry it, to say nothing of two such coats, and her ladyship's bones cracked when, stiff and stately, she drove to a court-ball.

The General was old and grey, but looked well on horseback. He knew that, and he rode out every day with a groom at a respectful distance behind him. When he came to a party, it was as if he came riding on his high horse, and he had so many orders that it was inconceivable; but that was not his fault at all. When quite a young man he had served in the army, had been at the great autumn manœuvres, which then were held by the troops in the days of peace. About that time he had an anecdote, the only one he had to tell. His under-officer cut off and took prisoner one of the princes; and the Prince with his little troop of captured soldiers, himself a prisoner, had to ride into the town behind the General. It was an event not to be forgotten, which always, through all the years,

was re-told by the General, with just the same memorable words which he had used when he returned the Prince's sabre to him, 'Only my subaltern could have taken your Highness prisoner, I never !' and the Prince answered, 'You are incomparable !' The General had never been in a real war ; when that went through the land, he went on the diplomatic path, through three foreign courts. He spoke the French language, so that he almost forgot his own ; he danced well, he rode well, orders grew on his coat in profusion ; sentinels presented arms to him, and one of the most beautiful young girls presented herself to him and became his wife, and they had a charming baby, which seemed to have fallen down from Heaven, it was so lovely, and the Porter's son danced in the yard for her, as soon as she could take notice, and gave her all his coloured pictures, and she looked at them, and was delighted with them, and tore them to pieces. She was so fine and so charming !

'My rose-leaf,' said the General's lady, 'you are born for a Prince !'

The Prince already stood outside the door ; but they did not know it. People cannot see very far beyond the door-step.

'The other day, our boy shared his bread and butter with her,' said the Porter's wife ; 'there was neither cheese nor meat on it, but she enjoyed it as if it had been roast-beef.' The General's people would have brought the house down if they had seen that feast, but they didn't see it.

George had shared his bread and butter with little Emily ; he would willingly have shared his heart with her, if it would have pleased her. He was a good boy, he was clever and sprightly, he now went to the evening class at the Academy, to learn to draw properly. Little Emily also made progress in learning ; she talked French with her nurse, and had a dancing-master.

'George will be confirmed at Easter,' said the Porter's wife. George was now so far advanced.

'It would be sensible to put him to a trade,' said the father—'a nice trade it should be, of course, and so we should have him out of the house.'

‘He will have to sleep at home at night,’ said the mother; ‘it is not easy to find a master who has room for him to sleep; clothes, too, we must give him; the little bit of food he eats is easily got, he is quite happy with one or two boiled potatoes; he has free education too. Just let him go his own way, you will see that he will be a pleasure to us; the Professor said so.’

The confirmation clothes were ready. The mother herself had sewed them, but they were cut out by the jobbing tailor, and he cut well. If he had only been in a better position, and had been able to have a workshop and workmen, said the Porter’s wife, he might very well have been court-tailor.

The confirmation clothes were ready, and the confirmant was ready. On the confirmation day George got a large pinchbeck watch from his godfather, the flax-dealer’s old workman, the richest of George’s godfathers. The watch was old and tried; it always went fast, but that is better than going slow. It was a costly present; and from the General’s came a Psalm-book, bound in morocco, sent from the little lady to whom George had presented his pictures. In the front of the book stood his name and her name and ‘earnest well-wishes’. It was written from the dictation of the General’s lady, and the General had read it through and said, ‘Charming!’

‘It was really a great attention from such grand gentle-folk,’ said the Porter’s wife; and George had to go up in his confirmation clothes and with the Psalm-book, to show himself and return thanks.

The General’s lady was much wrapped up, and had one of her bad headaches, which she always had when she was tired of things. She looked kindly at George, and wished him everything good and never to have her headaches. The General was in his dressing-gown, and wore a tasselled cap and red-topped Russian boots. He went up and down the floor three times in thoughts and memories of his own, stood still, and said,

‘So little George is now a Christian man? Let him be also an honest man, and honour his superiors. Some day, as an old man, you can say that the General taught you that sentence!’

This was a longer speech than he usually made, and he returned again to his meditation and looked dignified. But of all that George heard or saw up there, he kept most clearly in his thoughts the little Miss Emily; how charming she was, how gentle, how light, and how fragile! If she was to be painted, it must be in a soap-bubble. There was a fragrance about her clothes, about her curly, golden hair, as if she was a fresh-blossomed rose-tree; and with her he had once shared his bread and butter! She had eaten it with a hearty appetite, and nodded to him at every other mouthful. Could she remember it still? Yes, certainly; she had given him the beautiful Psalm-book 'in memory' of it; and then the first time the New Year's new moon was seen, he went outside with bread and a farthing, and opened the book to see what Psalm he would light upon. It was a psalm of praise and thanksgiving; and he opened it again to see what would be granted to little Emily. He took care not to dip into the book where the funeral hymns were, and yet he opened it between Death and the Grave. This was nothing to put faith in, and yet he was frightened when the dainty little girl was soon laid up in bed, and the doctor's carriage stopped outside the gate every noon.

'They won't keep her!' said the Porter's wife; 'our Lord knows well whom He will have!'

But they did keep her; and George drew pictures and sent them to her; he drew the Castle of the Czar, the old Kremlin in Moscow, exactly as it stood, with towers and cupolas; they looked like gigantic green and golden cucumbers, at least in George's drawings. They pleased little Emily so much, and therefore, in the course of a week, George sent a few more pictures, all of them buildings, because with them she could imagine so much inside the doors and windows. He drew a Chinese house, with bells throughout all the sixteen stories; he drew two Greek temples, with slender marble pillars, and steps round about; he drew a Norwegian church; one could see that it was made entirely of timber, carved and wonderfully set up, every story looked as if it were on cradle-rockers. Most beautiful of all, however, was one drawing, a castle, which he called 'Little Emily's'. In such a one should she live; George had completely

thought it out, and had taken for that castle everything that he thought most beautiful in the other buildings. It had carved beams like the Norwegian church, marble pillars like the Greek temple, bells in every story, and at the top of all, cupolas, green and gilded, like those on the Czar's Kremlin. It was a real child's castle, and under each window was written what the room or hall was to be used for : ' Here Emily sleeps,' ' Here Emily dances,' and ' Here Emily plays at receiving visitors.' It was amusing to see, and it was looked at too.

' Charming ! ' said the General.

But the old Count, for there was an old Count, who was still more dignified than the General, and himself had a castle and an estate, said nothing ; he heard that it was designed and drawn by the Porter's little son. He was not so little, however, seeing that he was confirmed. The old Count looked at the pictures, and had his own quiet thoughts about them.

One day, when the weather was downright grey, wet, and horrid, was one of the brightest and best for little George. The Professor of the Academy of Art called him in.

' Listen, my friend,' said he, ' let us have some talk together ! God has been very good to you with abilities ; He is also good to you with good people. The old Count at the corner has spoken to me about you ; I have also seen your pictures ; we will draw the pencil over them ; in them there is much to correct ! Now you can come twice a week to the drawing school, and you will be able to do better afterwards. I believe there is more in you to make an architect than a painter ; you can have time to consider that yourself ; but to-day you must go up to the old Count at the corner, and thank our Lord for such a man ! '

It was a great house at the corner ; round the windows were carved elephants and dromedaries, all from olden times ; but the old Count thought most of the new times with what good they brought, whether it came from the first floor, the cellar, or the garret.

' I believe,' said the Porter's wife, ' that the more folks are really grand, the less stuck-up they are ! How charming and straightforward the old Count is ! And he speaks

just like you and me ! the General's people can't do that. Was George not quite wild with delight yesterday, over the delightful treatment he got from the Count ; and to-day I am the same after having spoken with the great man. Is it not a good thing now, that we did not apprentice George to a trade ? He has abilities.'

'But they must have help from outside,' said the father.

'He has got that now,' said the mother, 'the Count said it clearly and distinctly.'

'It is from the General's, though, that it was all set going !' said the father. 'We must also thank them.'

'That we can well do,' said the mother, 'but I don't believe there is much to thank them for ; I will thank our Lord, and I will also thank Him because the little Emily is coming to herself again !' Emily kept getting on, and George kept getting on ; in the course of the year he got the little silver medal, and afterwards the bigger one.

'It would have been better if he had been put to a trade,' said the mother, and wept ; 'then we should have kept him ! What shall he do in Rome ? I shall never see him again, even if he comes home, but he won't do that, the sweet child !'

'But it is his good fortune and his glory !' said the father.

'Yes, thank you, my friend,' said the mother, 'but you don't mean what you say ! You are as much distressed as I am !'

And it was true, both about the grief and the going away. Everybody said it was great good fortune for the young fellow !

And parting visits were paid, including one to the General's ; but the lady did not show herself, she had one of her headaches. By way of farewell the General told his only anecdote, about what he had said to the Prince, and what the Prince said to him, 'You are incomparable !' Then he gave George his hand—his flabby hand ; Emily also gave George her hand and looked almost distressed, but George was the most distressed of all.

Time goes when one is doing something ; it goes also when one is doing nothing. The time is equally long, but

not equally profitable. For George it was profitable, and not at all long, except when he thought about those at home. How were they getting on upstairs and downstairs ? Well, he got news of them ; and one can put so much in a letter, both the bright sunshine, and the dark, heavy days. They lay in the letter, which told that the father was dead, and only the mother was left behind. Emily had been like an angel of comfort ; she had come down to her, the mother wrote, and added that she herself had got leave to keep the employment at the gate.

The General's lady kept a diary ; in it was recorded every party, every ball, she had gone to, and all the visitors she had received. The diary was illustrated with the visiting cards of diplomats and the highest nobility. She was proud of her diary ; it grew for many a day, during many big headaches, and also during many brilliant nights, that is to say, court-balls.

Emily had been at a court-ball for the first time. The mother was dressed in pink with black lace ; Spanish ! The daughter in white, so clear, so fine ! green ribbons fluttered like leaves of sedge amongst her curly, golden hair, which bore a crown of water-lilies. Her eyes were so blue and so clear, her mouth so small and red, she looked like a little mermaid, as lovely as can be imagined. Three princes danced with her, that is to say, first one and then another ; the General's lady did not have a headache for a week.

But the first ball was not the last one ; it was all too much for Emily, and it was a good thing that the summer came with its rest and fresh air. The family was invited to the old Count's castle. It was a castle with a garden worth seeing. One part of it was quite as in olden days, with stiff, green hedges, where one seemed to go between green screens, in which there were peep-holes. Box-trees and yew-trees were clipped into stars and pyramids ; water sprang from great grottoes, set with cockle-shells : round about stood stone figures of the very heaviest stone, one could see that by the clothes and the faces ; every flower-bed had its shape of a fish, shield, or monogram ; that was the French part of the garden. From there one came, as it were, into the fresh open wood, where the trees dared to

grow as they would, and were therefore so big and so beautiful. The grass was green, and good for walking on; it was rolled, mowed, and well kept; that was the English part of the garden.

‘Olden times and modern times,’ said the Count, ‘here they glide well into each other! In about two years the house itself will get its proper appearance. It will undergo a complete change to something better and more beautiful. I shall show you the plans, and I shall show you the architect. He is here to-day for dinner!’

‘Charming!’ said the General.

‘It is like Paradise here!’ said her ladyship, ‘and there you have a baronial castle!’

‘That is my hen-house,’ said the Count. ‘The pigeons live in the tower, the turkeys on the first floor, but on the ground floor old Dame Elsie rules. She has guest-chambers on all sides: the sitting-hens by themselves, the hen with chickens by herself, and the ducks have their own outlet to the water!’

‘Charming!’ repeated the General, and they all went to see this fine show.

Old Elsie stood in the middle of the room, and by the side of her was George, the architect; he and little Emily met after many years, met in the hen-house. Yes, there he stood, and he was nice enough to look at; his face open and decided, with black glossy hair, and on his lips a smile which said, ‘There sits a rogue behind my ear who knows you outside and in.’ Old Elsie had taken her wooden shoes off, and stood on her stocking soles, in honour of the distinguished guests. And the hens cackled, and the cock crew, and the ducks waddled away with ‘quack, quack!’ But the pale, slender girl, the friend of his childhood, the General’s daughter, stood there with a rosy tinge on the otherwise pale cheeks; her eyes became so big, and her mouth spoke without saying a single word, and the greeting he got was the prettiest any young man could wish for from a young lady, if they were not related or had never danced much together; she and the architect had never danced with each other.

The Count shook hands with him, and presented him: ‘Our young friend, Mr. George, is not quite a stranger.’

Her ladyship curtsied, the daughter was about to give him her hand, but she did not give it. 'Our little Mr. George!' said the General, 'old house-friends; charming!'

'You have become quite an Italian,' said her ladyship, 'and you talk the language like a native, I suppose.'

Her ladyship sang Italian, but did not speak it, the General said.

At the dinner-table George sat at Emily's right hand. The General had taken her in, the Count had taken in her ladyship.

Mr. George talked and told anecdotes, and he told them well; he was the life and soul of the party, although the old Count could have been that too. Emily sat silent; her ears heard, and her eyes shone, but she said nothing. Afterwards she and George stood in the verandah amongst the flowers; a hedge of roses hid them. George was again the first to speak.

'Thank you for your kindness to my old mother!' said he; 'I know that the night my father died, you came down to her, and stayed with her till his eyes were closed. Thanks!' He caught Emily's hand and kissed it; he might do that on this occasion. She blushed rosy-red, but pressed his hand again and looked at him with her tender blue eyes.

'Your mother was a loving soul! how fond she was of you! And she let me read all your letters; I believe I almost know you! how kind you were to me when I was little; you gave me pictures——'

'Which you tore in pieces!' said George.

'No! I have still my castle,—the drawing of it.'

'And now I must build it in reality!' said George, and grew quite hot with what he said.

The General and her ladyship talked in their own room about the Porter's son; he knew how to comport himself, and could express himself with knowledge and intelligence. 'He could be a tutor!' said the General.

'Genius!' said her ladyship, and she said no more.

Often in the lovely summer-time Mr. George came to the castle of the Count. He was missed when he did not come.

'How much more God has given to you than to us other

poor creatures !' said Emily to him. ' Do you realize that properly ? '

It flattered George that the lovely young girl looked up to him, and he thought her uncommonly gifted. And the General felt himself more and more convinced that Mr. George could not possibly be a child of the cellar.

' The mother was, however, a very honest woman,' said he ; ' I owe that to her memory.'

The summer went and the winter came, and there was more talk about Mr. George ; he had been received with favour in the highest places. The General had met him at a court-ball. And now there was to be a ball in the house for little Emily. Could Mr. George be invited ?

' Whom the King invites, the General can invite,' said the General, and lifted himself a whole inch from the floor.

Mr. George was invited, and he came ; and princes and counts came, and the one danced better than the other ; but Emily could only dance the first dance. In it she sprained her foot, not badly, but enough to feel it ; so she had to be careful, stop dancing, and look at the others ; and she sat and looked, and the architect stood by her side :

' You are surely giving her the whole of St. Peter's !' said the General, as he went past, and smiled like benevolence itself.

With the same benevolent smile he received Mr. George some days after. The young man certainly came to call after the ball, what else ? Yes, the most astounding, the most astonishing thing ; he came with insane words ; the General could not believe his own ears ; a perfectly incredible proposal,—Mr. George asked for little Emily as his wife !

' Man !' said the General, and began to boil. ' I don't understand you in the least ! What do you say ? What do you want ? I don't know you ! Sir ! Fellow ! it comes into your head to come like this into my house ! am I to be here, or am I not to be here ? ' and he went backwards into his bedroom and locked the door, leaving George standing alone. He stood for some minutes, and then turned about to go. In the corridor stood Emily.

' My father answered——?' she asked, and her voice trembled.

George pressed her hand. 'He ran from me!—there is a better time coming!'

There were tears in Emily's eyes; in those of the young man were courage and confidence; and the sun shone in upon the two and gave them his blessing. In his room sat the General, perfectly boiling; in fact he boiled over and sputtered out, 'Madness! Porter's madness!'—

Before an hour had passed, the General's lady got it from the General's own mouth, and she called for Emily and sat alone with her.

'You poor child! to insult you so! to insult us! You have tears in your eyes, but it suits you! You are charming in tears! You resemble me on my wedding-day. Cry away, little Emily!'

'Yes, that I must,' said Emily, 'if you and father don't say "Yes!"'

'Child!' cried her ladyship, 'you are ill! you talk in delirium, and I am getting my frightful headache! to think of all the unhappiness which comes to our house! Do not be your mother's death, Emily. Then you will have no mother!'

And her ladyship's eyes grew wet; she could not bear to think of her own death.

In the newspaper one read amongst the appointments: 'Mr. George, appointed Professor.'

'It is a pity his parents are in their grave and cannot read it!' said the new porter-folk, who now lived in the cellar, under the General's; they knew that the Professor had been born and brought up within their four walls.

'Now he will come in for paying the tax on titles,' said the man.

'Yes, is it not a great deal for a poor child,' said the wife.

'Forty shillings in the year!' said the man, 'yes, that is a lot of money!'

'No, I mean the position!' said the wife. 'Do you suppose he will trouble himself about the money; he can earn that many times over; and he will, no doubt, get a rich wife besides. If we had children, they should also be architects and professors.'

George was well spoken of in the cellar, he was well spoken of on the first floor; even the old Count condescended to do so.

It was the pictures from his childhood days which gave occasion for it. But why were they mentioned? They were talking about Russia, and about Moscow, and so of course they came to the Kremlin, which little George had once drawn for little Emily; he had drawn so many pictures! but one in particular, the Count remembered: 'little Emily's castle,' where she slept, where she danced, and played at 'receiving visitors'. The Professor had much ability; he would certainly die an old Privy-Councillor, it was not impossible, and before that he might have built a castle for the young lady; why not?

'That was a curious flight of fancy!' observed her ladyship, when the Count had departed. The General shook his head thoughtfully, rode out with his groom at a respectful distance, and sat more proudly than ever on his high horse.

It was little Emily's birthday; flowers and books, letters and cards, were brought; her ladyship kissed her on the mouth, the General on the forehead; they were affectionate parents, and both she and they had distinguished visitors—two of the Princes. There was talk about balls and theatres, about diplomatic embassies, the government of kingdoms and countries. There was talk of talent, native talent, and with that, the young Professor was brought into the conversation—Mr. George, the architect.

'He builds for immortality!' it was said, 'he will certainly build himself into one of the first families, too!'

'One of the first families?' repeated the General to his lady afterwards; 'which one of our first families?'

'I know which was meant,' said her ladyship, 'but I will say nothing about it! I will not even think it! God ordains! but I will be astonished!'

'Let me also be astonished!' said the General, 'I have not an idea in my head,' and he sank into a reverie.

There is a power, an unspeakable power, in the fountain of favour from above, the favour of the court, or the favour of God;—and all that gracious favour little George had. But we forget the birthday.

Emily's room was fragrant with flowers from friends of both sexes, on the table lay lovely presents of greeting and remembrance, but not a single one from George ; that could not come, but it was not needed either, the whole house was a remembrance of him. Even from the sand-hole under the stair a memorial flower peeped ; there Emily had hidden when the curtain was burnt, and George came as first fire-engine. A glance out of the window, and the acacia tree reminded her of childhood's days. Flowers and leaves had fallen off, but the tree stood in the hoar-frost, as if it were a monster branch of coral, and the moon shone big and clear amongst the branches, unchanged in all its changing, as when George shared his bread and butter with little Emily. From a drawer she took out the drawings of the Czar's castle, with her own castle,—keepsakes from George. They were looked at and mused upon, and many thoughts arose ; she remembered the day, when, unobserved by her father and mother, she went down to the Porter's wife, who was lying at the point of death. She sat beside her and held her hand, and heard her last words,—‘ Blessing—George ! ’ The mother thought of her son. Now Emily put her own meaning into the words. Yes, George was with her on her birthday, really with her !

The next day, it so happened, there was again a birthday in the house—the General's birthday ; he was born the day after his daughter, but of course at an earlier date, many years earlier. Again there came presents, and amongst them a saddle, of distinguished appearance, comfortable and costly ; there was only one of the princes who had its equal. Who could it be from ? The General was delighted. A little card came with it. If it had said, ‘ Thanks for yesterday,’ we could have guessed from whom it came ; but on it was written, ‘ From one whom the General does not know ! ’

‘ Who in the world do I not know ? ’ said the General. ‘ I know everybody ! ’ and his thoughts went into society ; he knew every one there. ‘ It is from my wife,’ he said at last, ‘ she is making fun of me ! Charming ! ’

But she was not making fun of him ; that time had gone past.

And now there was a festival again, but not at the

General's ; a costume ball at the house of one of the princes. Masks were also allowed.

The General went as Rubens, in a Spanish costume with a little ruff, a sword and stately bearing ; her ladyship as Madame Rubens, in black velvet, high-necked, frightfully warm, with a mill-stone round her neck—that is to say, a huge ruff, quite in accordance with a Dutch painting which the General possessed, and in which the hands in particular were much admired—they were quite like her ladyship's. Emily was Psyche in muslin and lace. She was like a floating tuft of swan's-down : she had no need of wings, she only wore them as a sign of Psyche. There was splendour, magnificence, lights, and flowers, richness, and taste ; there was so much to see, that no one noticed Madame Rubens's beautiful hands.

A black domino, with acacia-blossoms in the hat, danced with Psyche.

'Who is he ?' asked her ladyship.

'His Royal Highness !' said the General ; 'I am quite sure of it, I knew him at once by his hand-shake.'

Her ladyship doubted.

General Rubens had no doubts ; he approached the black domino, and wrote royal initials on his hand ; they were denied, but a hint was given ;—'The motto of the saddle ! One whom the General does not know !'

'But I do know you, then !' said the General. 'You have sent me the saddle.'

The domino lifted his hand, and disappeared amongst the others.

'Who is the black domino you were dancing with, Emily ?' asked the General's wife.

'I have not asked his name,' she answered.

'Because you knew it ! It is the Professor ! Your Professor is here, Count,' she continued, turning to the Count, who stood close by. 'Black domino, with acacia-blossom !'

'Very possibly, my dear madam,' answered he ; 'but one of the princes is also wearing the same costume.'

'I know the hand-shake !' said the General. 'The Prince sent me the saddle. I am so certain of it, that I shall invite him to dinner.'

‘Do so! if it is the Prince, he will be sure to come,’ said the Count.

‘And if it is the other, he will not come!’ said the General, and approached the black domino, who was just then talking with the King. The General delivered a very respectful invitation,—‘so that they might get to know each other.’ The General smiled in full confidence and certainty of whom he was inviting; he spoke loudly and distinctly.

The Domino raised his mask: it was George.

‘Does the General repeat the invitation?’ asked he. The General drew himself an inch higher, assumed a stiffer bearing, took two steps backwards, and one step forwards, as if in a minuet; and there was gravity and expression, as much of the General as could be expressed in his aristocratic face.

‘I never take back my word; the Professor is invited,’ and he bowed with a glance at the King, who could certainly have heard the whole.

And so there was a dinner at the General’s, only the Count and his protégé were invited.

‘The foot under the table,’ thought George, ‘then the foundation-stone is laid!’ and the foundation-stone was really laid with great solemnity, by the General and her ladyship.

The person had come, and as the General knew and recognized, had talked quite like a man of good society, had been most interesting; the General had been obliged many times to say his ‘Charming!’ Her ladyship talked of her dinner-party, talked of it even to one of the court ladies; and she, who was one of the most gifted, begged for an invitation the next time the Professor came. So he had to be invited again, and he was invited and came, and was again charming; he could even play chess.

‘He is not from the cellar!’ said the General, ‘he is quite certainly of a good family! there are many of good family, and the young man is not to blame for that.’

The Professor, who was admitted to the house of the King, might well be allowed to enter the General’s; but to take root in it,—there was no talk of that, except in the whole town.

He grew. The dew of grace fell from above !

It was therefore no surprise, that when the Professor became a Privy Councillor, Emily became a Privy Councillor's wife.

'Life is either a tragedy or a comedy,' said the General. 'In tragedy they die, in comedy they marry each other.'

Here they had each other. And they also had three strong boys, but not all at once.

The sweet children rode hobby-horses through the rooms and halls, when they were at Grandfather's and Grandmother's, and the General also rode on a hobby-horse behind them 'as groom for the little Privy-Councillors !'

Her ladyship sat on the sofa and smiled, even if she had her bad headache.

So far had George got on, and much farther too, else it would not have been worth while telling about the Porter's son.

THE SNOWDROP, OR SUMMER-GECK

It was winter-time ; the air was cold, the wind sharp ; but indoors it was snug and warm. Indoors lay the flower ; it lay in its bulb under the earth and the snow.

One day rain fell ; the drops trickled through the snow-coverlet, down into the ground, touched the flower-bulb, and told about the bright world up above ; soon a sunbeam, fine and pointed, pierced its way through the snow, down to the bulb, and tapped on it.

'Come in !' said the flower.

'I can't,' said the sunbeam, 'I am not strong enough to open the door ; I shall be strong when summer comes.'

'When will it be summer ?' asked the flower, and repeated it every time a new sunbeam pierced down to it. But it was a long time till summer : the snow still lay on the ground, and every night ice formed on the water.

'How long it is in coming ! How long it is !' said the flower ; 'I feel a prickling and tingling, I must stretch myself, I must stir myself, I must open up, I must get out

and nod good morning to the summer ; that will be a happy time ! ’

And the flower stretched itself and strained itself inside against the thin shell, which the water outside had softened, which the snow and the earth had warmed, and the sunbeam had tapped upon ; it shot out under the snow, with its whitey-green bud on its green stalk, with narrow, thick leaves, which seemed trying to shelter it. The snow was cold, but permeated with light and easy to push through ; and here the sunbeams came with greater strength than before.

‘ Welcome ! welcome ! ’ sang every sunbeam, and the flower raised itself above the snow, out into the world of light. The sunbeams patted and kissed it, so that it opened itself completely, white as snow, and adorned with green stripes. It bowed its head in gladness and humility.

‘ Beautiful flower,’ sang the sunbeams, ‘ how fresh and pure thou art ! Thou art the first ; thou art the only one ! Thou art our darling ! Thou ringest in summer, lovely summer, over town and field ! All the snow shall melt ! the cold winds shall be chased away ! we shall rule ! Everything will become green ! And then thou wilt have company, lilacs, and laburnum, and last of all the roses ; but thou art the first, so fine and pure ! ’

It was a great delight. It seemed as if the air was music, as if the beams of light penetrated into its leaves and stalk. There it stood, so fine and fragile, and yet so strong, in its young beauty ; it stood there in its white kirtle with green ribbons, and praised the summer. But it was far from summer-time, clouds hid the sun, and sharp winds blew upon the flowers.

‘ Thou art come a little too early,’ said Wind and Weather ; ‘ we still have power, and that thou shalt feel and submit to. Thou shouldst have kept indoors, not run out to make a show. It is not time yet ! ’

It was biting cold ! The days which came, brought not a single sunbeam ; it was weather to freeze to pieces in, for such a little delicate flower. But there was more strength in it than it knew of ; it was strong in joy and faith in the summer, which must come, which was foretold to it by its own deep longing, and confirmed by the warm

sunshine ; and so it stood with confident hope, in its white dress, in the white snow, bowing its head, when the snow-flakes fell heavy and thick, whilst the icy winds swept over it.

‘Thou wilt be broken !’ said they, ‘wither and freeze : what didst thou seek out here ! Why wert thou lured abroad ! the sunbeam has fooled thee ! Now canst thou enjoy thyself, thou summer-geck ?’

‘Summer-geck !’ echoed in the cold morning hours.

‘Summer-geck !’ shouted some children who came down into the garden, ‘there stands one so pretty, so beautiful, the first, the only one !’

And these words did the flower so much good ; they were words like warm sunbeams. The flower did not even notice in its gladness that it was being plucked : it lay in a child’s hand, was kissed by a child’s lips, was brought into a warm room, gazed at by kind eyes, and put in water, so strengthening, so enlivening. The flower believed that it was come right into summer, all at once.

The daughter of the house, a pretty little girl, was just confirmed ; she had a dear friend, and he was also just confirmed. ‘He shall be my summer-geck,’ said she ; so she took the fragile little flower, laid it in a piece of scented paper, on which were written verses, verses about the flower. Yes, it was all in the verses, and it was made up as a letter ; the flower was laid inside, and it was all dark about it, as dark as when it lay in the bulb. The flower went on a journey, lay in the post-bag, was pressed and squeezed, and that was not pleasant, but it came to an end at last.

The journey was over, the letter was opened and read by the dear friend ; he was so delighted he kissed the flower, and laid it, with the verses around it, in a drawer, in which were many delightful letters, but all without a flower ; this was the first, the only one, as the sunbeams had called it, and that was very pleasant to think about. It got a long time to think about it, it thought whilst the summer passed, and the long winter passed, and it was summer once more ; then it was brought out again. But this time the young man was not at all delighted ; he gripped the paper hard and threw away the verses, so

that the flower fell on the floor ; it had become flat and withered, but it should not have been thrown on the floor for all that ; still it was better lying there than on the fire, where the letter and verses were blazing. What had happened ? What so often happens. The flower had fooled him ; it was a jest, the maiden had fooled him, and that was no jest ; she had chosen another sweetheart in mid-summer. In the morning, the sun shone in on the little flattened summer-geck, which looked as if it were painted on the floor. The girl who was sweeping took it up and put it in one of the books on the table ; she thought it had fallen out, when she was clearing up and putting things in order. And so the flower lay again amongst verses, printed verses, and they are grander than written ones ; at least more is spent upon them.

Years passed away, and the book stood on the shelf. At length it was taken down, opened and read ; it was a good book,—songs and poems by the Danish poet, Ambrosius Stub, who is well worth knowing. And the man who read the book, turned the page. ‘Here is a flower!’ said he, ‘a summer-geck! not without some meaning does it lie here. Poor Ambrosius Stub! he was also a summer-geck, a befooled poet! he was too early in his time ; and so he got sleet and sharp winds, and went his rounds amongst the gentlemen of Fyen, like the flower in the flower-glass, the flower in the verses. A summer-geck, a winter-fool, all jest and foolery, and yet the first, the only, the youthfully fresh Danish poet. Yes, lie as a mark in the book, little summer-geck! Thou art laid there with some meaning.’

And so the summer-geck was laid in the book again, and felt itself both honoured and delighted with the knowledge that it was a mark in the lovely song-book, and that the one who had first sung and written about it, had also been a summer-geck, had been befooled in the winter. Of course the flower understood this in its own way, just as we understand anything in our own way.

This is the story of the summer-geck.

THE TOAD

THE well was deep, and so the rope was long ; the windlass had barely room to turn, when one came to lift the bucket full of water over the edge of the well. The sun could never get down to reflect itself in the water, however clear it was ; but so far as it managed to shine down, green plants grew between the stones.

A family of the toad-race lived there. They were immigrants, who had really come down there head-foremost with the old mother-toad, who still lived. The green frogs, who swarm in the water; and had been there much earlier, acknowledged relationship and called them 'the well-guests'. These quite intended to remain there ; they lived very comfortably on the dry land, as they called the wet stones.

The mother-frog had once travelled, had been in the bucket when it went up, but the light became too strong for her, and she got a pain in her eyes ; luckily she got out of the bucket. She fell with a frightful splash into the water, and lay three days afterwards with a pain in her back. She could not tell very much about the world up above, but she knew, and they all knew, that the well was not the whole world. Mother Toad should have been able to tell one or two things, but she never answered when she was asked, and so one did not ask.

'Thick and ugly, horrid and fat she is !' said the young green frogs. 'Her children will be just as ugly !'

'That may be so,' said Mother Toad, 'but one of them has a jewel in its head, or I have it myself !'

And the green frogs heard, and they stared ; and as they didn't like it, they made faces, and went to the bottom. But the young toads stretched their hind legs with sheer pride ; each of them believed that he had the jewel, and so they sat and kept their heads very still, but finally they asked what they were so proud of, and what a jewel really was.

'It is something so splendid and precious,' said Mother Toad, 'that I cannot describe it ! it is something that

one goes about with for one's own pleasure, and which the others go about and fret over. But don't ask, I won't answer !'

'Well, I have not got the jewel,' said the smallest toad; it was just as ugly as it could be. 'Why should I have



such a grand thing ? And if it vexes others, it cannot give me pleasure ! No, I only wish that I might come up to the edge of the well some time to look out. It must be charming there !'

'Better remain where you are !' said the old one. 'You know what you are doing then. Take care of the bucket, it may squash you ; and if you get safely into it, you may fall out ; not all fall so luckily as I did, and keep their limbs and eggs whole.'

‘Quack!’ said the little one, and it was just as when we mortals say ‘Alack!’

It had such a desire to get up to the edge of the well and look out; it felt such a longing after the green things up there; and when next morning the bucket, filled with water, was being drawn up, and accidentally stopped for a moment just by the stone, on which the toad sat, the little creature quivered and sprang into the full bucket, and sank to the bottom of the water, which then came up and was emptied out.

‘Ugh, confound it!’ said the man, who saw it. ‘It is the ugliest thing I have seen,’ and he made a kick with his wooden shoe at the toad, which came near to being crippled, but escaped by getting in amongst the high stinging-nettles. It saw stalk by stalk, and it looked upwards too. The sun shone on the leaves, they were quite transparent; it was for it, as it is for us when we come all at once into a great wood, where the sun shines through the leaves and branches.

‘It is much lovelier here than down in the well! One could wish to stay here all one’s life!’ said the little toad. It lay there one hour, it lay there two! ‘Now, I wonder what can be outside? As I have come so far, I may as well go farther!’ And it crawled as fast as it could, and came out on to the road, where the sun shone on it, and the dust powdered it whilst it marched across the high road.

‘Here one is really on dry land,’ said the toad; ‘I am getting almost too much of a good thing; it tickles right into me!’

Now it came to the ditch; the forget-me-nots grew here and the meadow-sweet; there was a hedge close by, with hawthorn and elder bushes; and the white-flowered convolvulus climbed over it. Here were colours to be seen; and yonder flew a butterfly; the toad thought it was a flower which had broken loose, the better to look about the world; it was such a natural thing to do.

‘If one could only get along like that,’ said the toad. ‘Ah! ah! how delightful!’

It stayed in the ditch for eight days and nights, and had no want of food. The ninth day it thought, ‘Farther

on now ! ’—but what more beautiful could be found ? Perhaps a little toad, or some green frogs. During the past night, it had sounded in the wind as if there were cousins in the neighbourhood. ‘ It is lovely to live ! to come up out of the well ; to lie among stinging-nettles ; to crawl along a dusty road, and to rest in the wet ditch ! but forward still ! let us find frogs or a little toad ; one cannot do without that ; Nature is not enough for one ! ’ And so it set out again on its wanderings. It came into the field, to a big pond with sedges round it, and it made its way into these.

‘ It is too wet for you here, isn’t it ? ’ said the frogs, ‘ but you are very welcome !—Are you a he or a she ? It does not matter, you are welcome all the same. ’

And so it was invited to a concert in the evening, a family concert ; great enthusiasm and thin voices,—we all know that kind. There were no refreshments, except free drinks,—the whole pond if they liked.

‘ Now I shall travel farther ! ’ said the little toad. It was always craving after something better. It saw the stars twinkle, so big and so clear ; it saw the new moon shine, it saw the sun rise, higher and higher.

‘ I am still in the well, in a bigger well ; I must get higher up ! I have a restlessness and a longing. ’

And when the moon was full and round, the poor creature thought, ‘ Can that be the bucket, which is let down, and which I can jump into, to come higher up ! or is the sun the big bucket ? how big it is, and how beaming ; it could hold all of us together. I must watch for my chance ! Oh, what a brightness there is in my head ! I don’t believe the jewel can shine better ! but I haven’t got it, and I don’t weep for it. No ; higher up in brightness and gladness ! I have an assurance, and yet a fear—it is a hard step to take ! but one must take it ! forwards ! right out on the highway ! ’

And it stepped out, as well as such a crawling creature can, and then it was on the highway where people lived ; there were both flower-gardens and kitchen-gardens. It rested beside a kitchen-garden.

‘ How many different beings there are, which I have never known ! and how big and blessed the world is !

But one must also look about in it, and not remain sitting in one place,' and so it hopped into the kitchen-garden. 'How green it is! how lovely it is here!'

'I know that well enough!' said the caterpillar on the leaf. 'My leaf is the biggest one here! it hides half the world, but I can do without that.'

'Cluck, cluck,' was heard, and fowls came tripping into the garden. The foremost hen was long-sighted; she saw the caterpillar on the curly leaf, and pecked at it, so that it fell to the ground, where it wriggled and twisted itself. The hen looked first with one eye and then with the other, for it did not know what was to be the end of this wriggling.

'It does not do that with any good intent,' thought the hen, and lifted its head to peck at it. The toad became so frightened, that it crawled right up towards the hen.

'So it has friends to help it!' said the hen, 'look at that crawler!' and it turned away. 'I don't care a bit about the little green mouthful: it only tickles one's throat!' The other fowls were of the same opinion, and so they went away.

'I wriggled myself away from it!' said the caterpillar, 'it is a good thing to have presence of mind; but the hardest task remains, to get back on to my cabbage leaf. Where is it?'

And the little toad came and expressed its sympathy. It was glad that it had frightened the hens with its ugliness.

'What do you mean by that?' asked the caterpillar. 'I wriggled myself away from them. You are very unpleasant to look at! May I be allowed to occupy my own place? Now I smell cabbage! Now I am close to my leaf! There is nothing so nice as one's own! But I must get higher up!'

'Yes, higher up!' said the little toad, 'higher up! it feels as I do! but it is not in a good humour to-day; that comes from the fright. We all wish to get higher up!' And it looked up as high as it could.

The stork sat in his nest on the farmer's roof; he chattered, and the mother-stork chattered.

'How high up they live!' thought the toad; 'if one could only get up there!'

In the farm-house lived two young students. The one

was a poet, the other a naturalist ; the one sang and wrote in gladness about all that God had made, and as it was reflected in his heart ; he sang it out, short, clear, and rich in melodious verse. The other took hold of the thing itself ; aye, split it up, if necessary. He took our Lord's creation as a vast sum in arithmetic, subtracted, multiplied, wanted to know it out and in and to talk with understanding about it ; and it was perfect understanding, and he talked in gladness and with wisdom about it. They were good, happy fellows, both of them.

'There sits a good specimen of a toad,' said the naturalist. 'I must have it in spirit.'

'You have two others already,' said the poet ; 'let it sit in peace, and enjoy itself !'

'But it is so beautifully ugly,' said the other.

'Yes, if we could find the jewel in its head !' said the poet, 'I myself would help to split it up.'

'The jewel !' said the other ; 'you are good at natural history !'

'But is there not something very beautiful in the common belief that the toad, the very ugliest of animals, often carries hidden in its head the most precious jewel ? Is it not the same with men ? What a jewel had not Aesop, and Socrates !'—The toad heard no more, and it did not understand the half of it. The two friends went on, and it escaped being put in spirit.

'They also talked about the jewel !' said the toad. 'It is a good thing that I have not got it ; otherwise I should have got into trouble.'

There was a chattering on the farmer's roof ; the father-stork was delivering a lecture to his family, and they looked down askance at the two young men in the kitchen-garden.

'Man is the most conceited creature !' said the stork. 'Listen how they chatter ! and yet they can't give a single decent croak. They are vain of their oratorical powers and their language ! And it is a rare language ! It becomes unintelligible every day's journey that we do. The one doesn't understand the other. Our language we can talk over the whole world, both in Denmark and in Egypt. And men can't fly at all ! they fly along by means of an invention which they call a railway, but they often break

their necks with that. I get shivers in my bill, when I think of it ; the world can exist without men. We can do without them. Let us only keep frogs and rain-worms !’

‘That was a grand speech !’ thought the little toad. ‘What a big man he is, and how high he sits, higher than I have ever seen any one before ! and how he can swim !’ it exclaimed, when the stork with outspread wings flew through the air.

And the mother-stork spoke in the nest, and told about the land of Egypt, about the water of the Nile, and about all the splendid mud which was in foreign lands ; it sounded quite new and charming to the little toad.

‘I must go to Egypt,’ it said, ‘if only the stork would take me with it ; or one of the young ones. I would do it a service in return on its wedding-day. Yes, I am sure I shall get to Egypt, for I am so lucky. All the longing and desire which I have is much better than having a jewel in one’s head.’

And it just had the jewel ; the eternal longing and desire, upwards, always upwards ! it shone within it, shone in gladness, and beamed with desire.

At that moment came the stork ; it had seen the toad in the grass, and he swooped down, and took hold of the little creature, not altogether gently. The bill pinched, the wind whistled ; it was not pleasant, but upwards it went—up to Egypt, it knew ; and so its eyes shone, as if a spark flew out of them. ‘Quack ! ack !’

The body was dead, the toad was killed. But the spark from his eyes, what became of it ?

The sunbeam took it, the sunbeam bore the jewel from the head of the toad. Whither ?

You must not ask the naturalist, rather ask the poet ; he will tell it you as a story ; and the caterpillar is in it, and the stork-family is in it. Think ! the caterpillar is transformed, and becomes a lovely butterfly ! The stork-family flies over mountains and seas, to distant Africa, and yet finds the shortest way home again to Denmark, to the same place, the same roof ! Yes, it is really almost too like a fairy tale, and yet it is true ! You may quite well ask the naturalist about it ; he must admit it, and you yourself know it too, for you have seen it.

But the jewel in the head of the toad ?

Look for it in the sun, see it there if you can. The splendour there is too strong. We have not yet got the eyes to look into all the glories which God has created, but some day we shall get them, and that will be the loveliest story, for we shall be in it ourselves !

GODFATHER'S PICTURE-BOOK

GODFATHER could tell stories, ever so many and ever so long ; he could cut out paper figures and draw pictures, and when it came near Christmas, he would bring out a copy-book, with clean white pages ; on this he pasted pictures, taken out of books and newspapers ; if he had not enough for the story he wished to tell, he drew them himself. When I was little, I got several such picture-books, but the loveliest of them all was the one from ' the memorable year when Copenhagen got gas in place of the old oil-lamps ', and that was set down on the first page.

' Great care must be taken of this book,' said Father and Mother ; ' it must only be brought out on grand occasions.'

Yet Godfather had written on the cover :

Though the book be torn, it is hardly a crime ;
Other young friends have done worse in their time.

Most delightful it was when Godfather himself showed the book, read the verses and the other inscriptions, and told so many things besides ; then the story became a real story.

On the first page there was a picture cut out of ' The Flying Post ', in which one saw Copenhagen with its Round Tower, and Our Lady's Church ; to the left of this was pasted an old lantern, on which was written ' Train-oil ', to the right was a chandelier—on it was written ' Gas '. ' See, that is the placard,' said Godfather ; ' that is the prologue to the story you are going to hear. It could also be given as a whole play, if one could have acted it : " Train-oil and Gas, or the Life and Doings of Copenhagen." That is a very good title ! At the foot of the page there is still another little picture ; it is not so easy to understand, so I shall explain it. That is a Death-horse. He ought

to have come only at the end of the book, but he has run on ahead to say, that neither the beginning, the middle, nor the end is any good ; he could have done it better himself—if he could have done it at all. The Death-horse, I must tell you, stands during the day tethered to the newspaper ; but in the evening he slips out and posts himself outside the poet's door and neighs, so that the man inside may die instantly ; but he does not die if there is any real life in him. The Death-horse is nearly always a poor creature who cannot understand himself, and cannot get a livelihood ; he must get air and food by going about and neighing. I am convinced that he thinks nothing of Godfather's picture-book, but for all that it may well be worth the paper it is written on.

‘Now, that is the first page of the book ; that is the placard.

‘It was just the last evening on which the old oil-lamps were lighted ; the town had got gas, and it shone so that the old lamps seemed to be quite lost in it.

‘I was in the street myself that evening,’ said Godfather. ‘The people walked up and down to look at the old and the new lighting. There were many people, and twice as many legs as heads. The watchmen stood about gloomily ; they did not know when they might be dismissed, like the lamps ; these themselves thought so far back—they dared not think forward. They remembered so much from the quiet evenings and the dark nights. I leaned up against a lamp-post,’ said Godfather ; ‘there was a sputtering in the oil and the wick ; I could hear what the lamp said, and you shall also hear it.

‘“We have done what we could,” said the lamp, “we have been sufficient for our time, have lighted up for joy and for sorrow ; we have lived through many remarkable things ; we have, so to speak, been the night-eyes of Copenhagen. Let new lights now take our place and undertake our office ; but how many years they may shine, and what they may light up, remains to be seen ! They certainly shine a little stronger than we old ones, but that is nothing, when one is made like a gas-chandelier, and has such connexions, as they have, the one pours into the

other ! They have pipes in all directions and can get new strength in the town and outside of the town ! But each one of us oil-lamps shines by what he has in himself and not by family relationship. We and our forefathers have shone for Copenhagen from immeasurably ancient times, far far back. But as this is now the last evening that we stand and shine in the second rank, so to speak, here in the street along with you, ye shining comrades, we will not sulk and be envious ; no, far from it, we will be glad and good-natured. We are the old sentinels, who are relieved by new-fashioned guards in better uniforms than ours. We will tell you what our family, right up to the great-great-great-grandmother lantern, has seen and experienced—the whole of Copenhagen's history. May you and your successors, right down to the last gas-chandelier, experience and be able to tell as remarkable things as we, when one day you get your discharge ! and you will get it, you may be prepared for that. Men are sure to find a stronger light than gas. I have heard a student say that it is hinted that they will yet burn sea-water !” The wick sputtered when the lamp said these words ; just as if it had water in it already.’

Godfather listened closely, thought it over and considered that it was an excellent idea of the old lantern, on this evening of transition from oil to gas, to recount and display the whole of the history of Copenhagen. ‘A good idea must not be let slip,’ said Godfather ; ‘I seized it directly, went home and made this picture-book for you, it goes still farther back in time than the lamps could go.

‘Here is the book ; here is the history :

“Copenhagen's Life and Doings ;”

it begins with pitch-darkness, a coal-black page—that is the Dark Ages.

‘Now we shall turn the page !’ said Godfather. ‘Do you see the pictures ? Only the wild sea and the blustering north-east wind ; it is driving heavy ice-floes along ; there is no one out to sail on them except great stone-blocks, which rolled down on to the ice from the mountains of Norway. The north wind blows the ice away ; he means to show the German mountains what boulders are found

up in the north. The ice-fleet is already down in the Sound, off the coast of Zealand, where Copenhagen now lies ; but there was no Copenhagen at that time. There were great sand-banks under the water, against one of these the ice-floes with the big boulders struck ; the whole of the ice-fleet stuck fast, the north-east wind could not float them again, and so he grew as mad as he could be, and pronounced a curse upon the sand-bank, " the thieves' ground," as he called it ; and he swore that if it ever lifted itself above the surface of the sea, thieves and robbers should come there, gallows and wheel should be raised on it.

' But whilst he cursed and swore in this manner, the sun broke forth, and in its beams there swayed and swung bright and gentle spirits, children of light ; they danced along over the chilling ice-floes, and melted them, and the great boulders sank down to the sandy bottom.

" " Sun-vermin ! " said the north wind, " is that comradeship and kinship ? I shall remember and revenge that. Now I pronounce a curse ! "

" " We pronounce a blessing ! " sang the children of light. " The sand-bank shall rise and we will protect it ! Truth and goodness and beauty shall dwell there ! "

" " Stuff and nonsense ! " said the north-east wind.

' Of all this the lantern had nothing to tell,' said Godfather, ' but I knew it, and it is of great importance for the life and doings of Copenhagen.

' Now we shall turn the page ! ' said Godfather. ' Years have passed, the sand-bank has lifted itself ; a sea-bird has settled on the biggest stone, which jutted out of the water. You can see it in the picture. Years and years have passed. The sea threw up dead fish on the sand. The tough lyme-grass sprang up, withered, rotted, and enriched the ground ; then came several different kinds of grasses and plants ; the bank became a green island. The Vikings landed there. There was level ground for fighting, and good anchorage beside the island off the coast of Zealand.

' The first oil-lamp was kindled, I believe, to cook fish over, and there were fish in plenty. The herrings swam in great shoals through the Sound ; it was hard to push a boat

through them ; they flashed in the water as if there was lightning down there, they shone in the depths like the Northern Lights. The Sound had wealth of fish, and so houses were built on the coast of Zealand ; the walls were of oak and the roofs of bark ; there were trees enough for the purpose. Ships came into the harbour ; the oil-lantern hung from the swaying ropes ; the north-east wind blew and sang—"U-hu-u." If a lantern shone on the island, it was a thieves' lantern. Smugglers and thieves exercised their trade on "Thieves' Island".

"I believe that all the evil that I wished will grow," said the north-east wind. "Soon will come the tree, of which I can shake the fruit."

'And here stands the tree,' said Godfather. 'Do you see the gallows on Thieves' Island? Robbers and murderers hang there in iron chains, exactly as they hung at that time. The wind blew so that the long skeletons rattled, but the moon shone down on them very serenely, as it now shines on a rustic dance. The sun also shone down serenely, crumbling away the dangling skeletons, and from the sunbeams the children of light sang ; "We know it ! we know it ! it shall yet be beautiful here in the time to come ! Here it will be good and splendid !"'

"Cackle ! cackle !" said the north-east wind.

'Now we turn over the page !' said Godfather.

'The bells were ringing in the town of Roskilde, where Bishop Absalon lived ; he could both read his Bible and swing his sword ; he had power and will ; the busy fishermen at the harbour whose town was growing and was now a market-place, Absalon wished to protect these from assault. He sprinkled the unhallowed ground with holy water ; Thieves' Island got a mark of honour. Masons and carpenters set to work on it ; a building grew up at the Bishop's command. The sunbeams kissed the red walls as they rose. There stood Axel's house :

The castle with its towers high in air,

Its balconies and many a noble stair.

Boo ! hoo !

The north-east wind in fury blew,

But the stronghold stood unyielding all the same.

And outside it stood "The Haven", the merchants' harbour:

Mermaid's bower 'mid gleaming lakes,
Built in groves of green.

'The foreigners came there and bought the wealth of fish, built booths and houses, with bladders for window-panes—glass was too dear; then came warehouses with gables and windlasses. Look! inside the shops sit the old bachelors; they dare not marry; they trade in ginger and pepper, the pepper-lads.

'The north-east wind blows through the streets and lanes, sends the dust flying, and tears a thatched roof off. Cows and pigs walk about in the street-ditch.

' "I shall cow and subdue them," says the north-east wind; "whistle round the houses and round Axel's house! I cannot miss it! They call it 'Gallows' Castle on Thieves' Island'." '

And Godfather showed a picture of it, which he himself had drawn. On the walls were stake after stake, and on every one sat the head of a captured pirate, and showed the teeth.

'That really happened,' said Godfather; 'and it is worth knowing about.

'Bishop Absalon was in his bath-room, and heard through the thin walls the arrival of a ship of freebooters. At once he sprang out of the bath and into his ship, blew his horn, and his crew came. The arrows flew into the backs of the robbers, who rowed hard to get away. The arrows fastened themselves in their hands, and there was no time to tear them out. Bishop Absalon caught every living soul and cut his head off, and every head was set up on the outer wall of the castle. The north-east wind blew with swollen cheeks—with bad weather in his jaw, as the sailors say.

' "Here I will stretch myself out," said the wind; "here I will lie down and look at the whole affair."

'It rested for hours, it blew for days; years went past.

'The watchman came out on the castle tower; he looked to the east, to the west, to the south, and the north. There you have it in the picture,' said Godfather, and

showed it. ' You see him there, but what he saw I shall tell you.

' From Steileborg's wall there is open water right out to Köge Bay, and broad is the channel over to Zealand's coast. In front of Serritslev and Solberg commons, where the large villages lie, grows up more and more the new town with gabled timber houses. There are whole streets for shoemakers and tailors, for grocers and ale-sellers; there is a market-place, there is a guild-hall, and close by the shore, where once there was an island, stands the splendid Church of St. Nicholas. It has a tower and a spire, immensely high; how it reflects itself in the clear water! Not far from this stands the Church of Our Lady, where masses are said and sung, incense gives out its odour, and wax-tapers burn. The merchants' haven is now the Bishop's town; the Bishop of Roskilde rules and reigns there.

' Bishop Erlandsen sits in Axel's house. There is cooking in the kitchen, there is serving of ale and claret, there is the sound of fiddles and kettledrums. Candles and lamps burn, the castle shines, as if it were a lantern for the whole country and kingdom. The north-east wind blows round the tower and walls, but they stand firm enough. The north-east wind blows round the western fortifications of the town—only an old wooden barricade, but it holds out well. Outside of it stands Christopher the First, the King of Denmark. The rebels have beaten him at Skelskør; he seeks shelter in the Bishop's town.

' The wind whistles, and says like the Bishop, " Keep outside! keep outside! The gate is shut for thee! "

' It is a time of trouble; these are dismal days; every man will have his own way. The Holstein banner waves from the castle tower. There is want and woe; it is the night of anguish. Strife is in the land, and the Black Death; pitch-dark night—but then came Waldemar. The Bishop's town is now the King's town; it has gabled houses and narrow streets; it has watchmen, and a town-hall; it has a fixed gallows by the west-port. None but townsmen can be hanged on it: one must be a citizen to be able to dangle there, to come up so high as to see Köge and the hens of Köge.

“That is a lovely gallows,” says the north-east wind ; “the beautiful grows !” and so it whistled and blew. From Germany blew trouble and want.

‘The Hansa merchants came,’ said Godfather ; ‘they came from warehouse and counter, the rich traders from Rostock, Lübeck, and Bremen ; they wanted to snatch up more than the golden goose from Waldemar’s Tower ; they had more power in the town of the Danish King than the Danish King himself ; they came with armed ships, and no one was prepared. King Eric had no mind either to fight with his German kinsfolk ; they were so many and so strong. So King Eric and all his courtiers hurried out at the west-port to the town of Sorö, to the quiet lake and the green woods, to the song of love and the goblet’s clang.

‘But one remained behind in Copenhagen, a kingly heart, a kingly mind. Do you see the picture here, the young woman, so fine and tender, with sea-blue eyes and flaxen hair ? it is Denmark’s Queen, Philippa, the English Princess. She stayed in the distracted city, where in the narrow lanes and streets with the steep stairs, sheds, and lath-and-plaster shops, townspeople swarmed and knew not what to do. She has the heart and courage of a man. She summons burghers and peasants, inspires and encourages them. They rig the ships and garrison the block-houses ; they bang away with the carbines ; there is fire and smoke, there is lightness of heart ; our Lord will not give up Denmark ! and the sun shines into all hearts, it beams out of all eyes in the gladness of victory. Blessed be Philippa ! and blessed she is in the hut and in the house, and in the castle of the King, where she looks after the wounded and the sick. I have cut a wreath and put it round the picture here,’ said Godfather. ‘Blessed be Queen Philippa !’

‘Now we spring years forward !’ said Godfather, ‘and Copenhagen springs with us. King Christian the First has been in Rome, has been blessed by the Pope, and greeted with honour and homage on the long journey. He is building here a hall of red brick ; learning shall grow there, and display itself in Latin. The poor man’s children from the plough or workshop can come there too, can live upon

alms, can attain to the long black gown and sing before the citizens' doors.

'Close to the hall of learning, where all is in Latin, lies a little house ; in it Danish rules, both in language and in customs. There is ale-porridge for breakfast, and dinner is at ten o'clock in the forenoon. The sun shines in through the small panes on cupboards and bookcases ; in the latter lie written treasures, Master Mikkell's "Rosary" and "Godly Comedies", Henrik Harpestreng's "Leech-book", and Denmark's "Rhyming Chronicle" by Brother Niels of Sorö. "Every man of breeding ought to know these," says the master of the house, and he is the man to make them known. He is Denmark's first printer, the Dutchman, Gotfred van Gehmen. He practises the blessed black art of book-printing.

'And books come into the King's castle, and into the houses of the burghers. Proverbs and songs get eternal life. Things which men dare not say in sorrow and pleasure are sung by the Bird of Popular Song, darkly and yet clearly ; it flies so free, it flies so wide, through the common sitting-room, through the knightly castle ; it sits like a falcon on the hand of the noble lady and twitters ; it steals in like a little mouse, and squeaks in the dungeon to the enslaved peasant.

"It is all mere words !" says the sharp north-east wind.

"It is spring-time !" say the sunbeams. "See how the green buds are peeping !"

'Now we will go forward in our picture-book !' said Godfather.

'How Copenhagen glitters ! There are tournaments and sports ; there are splendid processions ; look at the gallant knights in armour, at the noble ladies in silk and gold ! King Hans is giving his daughter Elizabeth to the Elector of Brandenburg ; how young she is, and how happy ! she treads on velvet ; there is a future in her thoughts, a life of household happiness. Close beside her stands her royal brother, Prince Christian, with the melancholy eyes and the hot, surging blood. He is dear to the townsfolk ; he knows their burdens ; he has the poor man's future in his thoughts. God alone decides our fortunes !

‘Now we will go on with the picture-book,’ said Godfather. ‘Sharp blows the wind, and sings about the sharp sword, about the heavy time of unrest.’

‘It is an icy-cold day in the middle of April. Why is the crowd thronging outside the castle, and in front of the old tolbooth, where the King’s ship lies with its sails and flags? There are people in the windows and on the roofs. There is sorrow and affliction, expectancy, and anxiety. They look towards the castle, where formerly there were torch-dances in the gilded halls, now so still and empty; they look at the window-balcony, from which King Christian so often looked out over the drawbridge, and along the narrow street, to his Dovelet, the little Dutch girl he brought from the town of Bergen. The shutters are closed, the crowd looks towards the castle; now the gate is opening, the drawbridge is being let down. King Christian comes with his faithful wife Elizabeth; she will not forsake her royal lord, now when he is so hard beset.’

‘There was fire in his blood, there was fire in his thoughts; he wished to break with the olden times, to break the peasants’ yoke, to be good to the burghers, to cut the wings of “the greedy hawks”; but they were too many for him. He departs from his country and kingdom, to win friends and kinsfolk for himself abroad. His wife and faithful men go with him; every eye is wet now in the hour of parting.’

‘Voices blend themselves in the song of time, against him and for him; a threefold choir. Hear the words of the nobles; they are written and printed:

“Woe to thee, Christian the Bad! the blood poured out on Stockholm’s market-place cries aloud and curses thee!”

‘And the monk’s shout utters the same sentence:

“Be thou cast off by God and by us! Thou hast called hither the Lutheran doctrine; thou hast given it church and pulpit, and let the tongue of the Devil speak. Woe to thee, Christian the Bad!”

‘But peasants and burghers weep so bitterly. “Christian, beloved of the people! No longer shall the peasant be sold like cattle, no longer be bartered away for a hound! That law is thy witness!”

‘But the words of the poor man are like chaff before the wind.

‘Now the ship sails past the castle, and the burghers run upon the ramparts, so that they may once more see the royal galley sail.

‘“The time is long, the time is hard ; trust not in friends or kinsmen.”

‘Uncle Frederick in the Castle of Kiel would like to be King of Denmark. King Frederick lies before Copenhagen ; do you see the picture here, “the faithful Copenhagen ?” Round about it are coal-black clouds, with picture on picture ; only look at each of them ! It is a resounding picture ; it still resounds in song and story : the heavy, hard, and bitter time in the course of the years.

‘How went it with King Christian, that wandering bird ? The birds have sung about it, and they fly far, over land and sea. The stork came early in the spring, from the south over the German lands ; it has seen what will now be told.

‘“I saw the fugitive King Christian driving on a heather-grown moor ; there met him a wretched car, drawn by one horse ; in it sat a woman, King Christian’s sister, the Margravine of Brandenburg—faithful to the Lutheran religion, she had been driven away by her husband. On the dark heath met the exiled children of a king. The time is hard, the time is long ; trust not in friend or in kin.”

‘The swallow came from Sönderborg Castle with a doleful song : “King Christian is betrayed. He sits there in the dungeon-tower deep as a well ; his heavy steps wear tracks in the stone floor, his fingers leave their marks in the hard marble.”

What sorrow ever found such vent
As in that furrowed stone ?

‘The fish-eagle came from the rolling sea ! it is open and free ; a ship flies over it ; it is the brave Sören Norby from Fyn. Fortune is with him—but fortune is changeful, like wind and weather.

‘In Jutland and Fyn the ravens and crows scream : “We

are out for spoil. It is grand ; it is grand ! Here lie bodies of horses, and of men as well." It is a time of trouble ; it is the Count of Oldenburg's war. The peasant seized his club and the townsman his knife, and shouted loudly : " We shall kill the wolves and leave no cub of them alive." Clouds of smoke rise from the burning towns.

' King Christian is a prisoner in Sönderborg Castle ; he cannot escape, or see Copenhagen and its bitter distress. On the North Common stands Christian III, where his father stood before. In the town is despair ; famine is there, and plague.

' Up against the church wall sits an emaciated woman in rags ; she is a corpse ; two living children lie on her lap and suck blood from the dead breast.

' Courage has fallen, resistance falls. Oh, thou faithful Copenhagen !

' Fanfares are blown. Listen to the drums and trumpets ! In rich dresses of silk and velvet, and with waving plumes, come the noble lords on gold-caparisoned horses ; they ride to the old market. Is there a joust or tournament after the usual custom ? Burghers and peasants in their best array are flocking thither. What is there to see ? Has a bonfire been made to burn popish images ? or does the hangman stand there, as he stood at Slaghoek's death fire ? The King, the ruler of the land, is Lutheran, and this shall now be solemnly proclaimed.

' High and mighty ladies and noble maidens sit with high collars and pearls in their caps, behind the open windows, and see all the show. On an outspread carpet, under a canopy, sit the councillors of state in antique dress, near the King's throne. The King is silent. Now his will is proclaimed in the Danish tongue, the will of the state-council. Burghers and peasants receive words of stern rebuke for the opposition they have shown to the high nobility. The burgher is humbled ; the peasant becomes a thrall. Now words of condemnation are uttered against the bishops of the land. Their power is past. All the property of the church and cloisters is transferred to the King and the nobles.

' Haughtiness and hate are there, pomp and misery.

‘The time of change has heavy clouds, but also sunshine ; it shone now in the hall of learning, in the student’s home, and names shine out from it right on to our time. Hans Tausen, the son of a poor smith in Fyn :

It was the little lad from Birkendø who came,
His name flew over Denmark, so widely spread his fame ;
A Danish Martin Luther, who drew the Gospel sword,
And gained a victory for truth and for the Word.

‘There also shines the name of Petrus Palladius ; so it is in Latin, but in Danish it is Peter Plade, the Bishop of Roskilde, also the son of a poor smith in Jutland. Among the names of noblemen shines that of Hans Friis, the Chancellor of the kingdom. He seated the students at his table, and looked after their wants, and those of the school-boys too. And one name before all others is greeted with hurrahs and song :

While but a single student here
At learning’s desk is seated,
So long shall good King Christian’s name
With loud Hurrahs be greeted.

‘Sunbeams came amongst the heavy clouds in that time of change.

‘Now we turn the page.

‘What whistles and sings in “The Great Belt” under the coast of Samsø ? From the sea rises a mermaid, with sea-green hair ; she tells the future to the peasant. A prince shall be born, who will become a king, great and powerful.

‘In the fields, under the blossoming white-thorn, he was born. His name now blooms in song and story, in the knightly halls and castles round about. The exchange sprang up with tower and spire ; Rosenborg lifted itself and looked far out over the ramparts ; the students themselves got a house of their own, and close beside it stood and still points to Heaven the “Round Tower”, which looks toward the island of Hveen where Uranienborg once stood. Its golden domes glittered in the moonlight, and mermaids sang of the master there whom kings and sages visited, the sage of noble blood, Tycho Brahe. He raised the name of Denmark so high, that along with the stars

of heaven it was known in all the cultured lands of the world. And Denmark spurned him away from her.

‘He sang for comfort in his grief :

Is not Heaven everywhere ?
What more then do I require ! ”

‘His song lives in the hearts of the people, like the mermaid’s song about Christian the Fourth.

‘Now comes a page which you must look at in earnest,’ said Godfather ; ‘there is picture after picture, as there is verse after verse in the old ballads. It is a song, so joyful in its beginning, so sorrowful in its ending.

‘A king’s child dances in the castle of the King ; how charming she is to see ! She sits on the lap of Christian the Fourth, his beloved daughter Eleonora. She grows in womanly virtues and graces. The foremost man amongst the nobles, Corfitz Ulfeldt, is her bridegroom. She is still a child, and still gets whippings from her stern governess ; she complains to her sweetheart, and with good right too. How clever she is, and cultured and learned ; she knows Latin and Greek, sings Italian to her lute, and is able to talk about the Pope and Luther.

‘King Christian lies in the chapel-vault in Roskilde Cathedral, and Eleonora’s brother is King. There is pomp and show in the palace in Copenhagen, there is beauty and wit ; foremost is the Queen herself, Sophia Amalia of Lyneborg. Who can guide her horse so well as she ? Who dances with such dignity as she ? Who talks with such knowledge and cleverness as Denmark’s Queen ? “Eleonora Christina Ulfeldt ! ”—these words were spoken by the French Ambassador—“in beauty and cleverness she surpasses all.”

‘From the polished dancing-floor of the palace grew the burdock of envy ; it hung fast, it worked itself in and twisted around itself, the scorn of contempt. “The base-born creature ! her carriage shall stop at the castle-bridge : where the Queen drives, the lady must walk.” There is a perfect storm of gossip, slander, and lies.

‘And Ulfeldt takes his wife by the hand in the quietness of the night. He has the keys of the town gates ; he opens

one of them, horses wait outside. They ride along the shore, and then sail away to Sweden.

‘Now we turn the page, even as fortune turns itself for these two.

‘It is autumn ; the day is short, the night is long ; it is grey and damp, the wind so cold, and rising in strength. It whistles in the leaves of the trees on the rampart, the leaves fly into Peter Oxe’s courtyard, which stands empty and forsaken by its owners. The wind sweeps out over Christianshaven, round Kai Lykke’s mansion, now a common jail. He himself has been hunted from honour and home ; his scutcheon is broken, his effigy hanged on the highest gallows. Thus is he punished for his wanton thoughtless words about the honoured Queen of the land. Shrilly pipes the wind, and rushes over the open place where the mansion of the Lord High Steward has stood ; only one stone of it is now left—“that I drove as a boulder down here on the floating ice,” whoops the wind. “The stone stranded where Thieves’ Island has since grown, under my curse, and so it came into the mansion of Lord Ulfeldt, where the lady sang to the sounding lute, read Greek and Latin, and bore herself proudly : now only the stone stands up here with its inscription :

“ ‘ TO THE ETERNAL SHAME AND DISGRACE OF THE
TRAITOR CORFITZ ULFELDT.’

“ “ But where is she now, the stately lady ? Hoo-ee ! hoo-ee ! ” pipes the wind with ear-splitting voice. In the Blue Tower, behind the palace, where the sea-water beats against the slimy walls, there she has already sat for many years. There is more smoke than warmth in the chamber ; the little window is high up under the ceiling. Christian the Fourth’s petted child, the daintiest of maids and matrons, in what discomfort and misery she sits. Memory hangs curtains and tapestries on the smoke-blackened walls of her prison. She remembers the lovely time of her childhood, her father’s soft and beaming features ; she remembers her splendid wedding ; the days of her pride, her hours of hardship in Holland, in England, and in Bornholm.

Naught seems too hard for wedded love to bear,
And faithfulness is not a cause for shame.

‘Still, he was with her then ; now she is alone, alone for ever. She knows not his grave, no one knows it.

Her faithfulness to him was all her crime.

‘She sat there for years, long and many, whilst life went on outside. It never stands still, but we will do that for a moment here, and think of her, and the words of the song :

I keep my promise to my husband still
In want and great necessity.

‘Do you see the picture here ? ’ said Godfather. ‘It is winter-time ; the frost makes a bridge between Lolland and Fyn, a bridge for Carl Gustav, who is pushing on irresistibly. There is plundering and burning, fear and want, in the whole land.

‘The Swedes are lying before Copenhagen. It is biting cold and a blinding snow ; but true to their king, and true to themselves, men and women stand ready for the fight. Every tradesman, shopman, student, and schoolmaster is up on the ramparts to defend and guard. There is no fear of the red-hot balls. King Frederick swore he would die in his nest. He rides up there and the queen with him. Courage, discipline, and patriotic zeal are there. Only let the Swede put on his grave-clothes, and crawl forward in the white snow, and try to storm ! Beams and stones are rolled down on him ; yea, the women come with brewing cauldrons and pour boiling pitch and tar over the storming enemy.

‘This night king and commoner are one united power. And there is rescue and there is victory. The bells ring ; songs of thanksgiving resound. Burgherfolk, here you won your knightly spurs !

What follows now ? See the picture here. Bishop Svane’s wife comes in a closed carriage. Only the high and mighty nobility may do that. The proud young gentlemen break the carriage down ; the bishop’s wife must walk to the bishop’s house.

‘Is that the whole story?—Something much bigger shall be broken next—the power of pride.

‘Burgomaster Hans Nansen and Bishop Svane grasp hands for the work, in the name of the Lord. They talk with wisdom and honesty; it is heard in the church and in the burgher’s house.

‘One hand-grip of fellowship, and the haven is blocked, the gates are locked, the alarm bell rings.

‘The power is given to the king alone, he who remained in his nest in the hour of danger; he governs, he rules over great and small. It is the time of absolute monarchy.

‘Now we turn the page and the time with it.

‘“Hallo, hallo, hallo!” The plough is laid aside, the heather gets leave to grow, but the hunting is good. “Hallo, hallo!” Listen to the ringing horn, and the baying hounds! See the huntsmen, see the king himself, King Christian V: he is young and gay. There is merriment in palace and in town. In the halls are wax-lights, in the courtyards are torches, and the streets of the town have got lamps. Everything shines so new! The new nobility, called in from Germany, barons and counts, get favours and gifts. Nothing passes current now except titles and rank, and the German language.

‘Then sounds a voice that is thoroughly Danish; it is the weaver’s son who is now a bishop; it is the voice of Kingo; he sings his lovely psalms.

‘There is another burgher’s son, a vintner’s son; his thoughts shine forth in law and justice; his law-book became gold-ground for the king’s name; it will stand for times to come. That burgher’s son, the mightiest man in the land, gets a coat of arms and enemies with it, and so the sword of the executioner is raised over the head of Griffenfeldt. Then grace is granted, with imprisonment for life. They send him to a rocky islet off the coast of Trondhjem,

Munkholm—Denmark’s St. Helena.

But the dance goes merrily in the palace hall; splendour and pomp are there; there is lively music, and courtiers and ladies dance there.

‘Now comes the time of Frederick IV !

‘See the proud ships with the flag of victory ! See the rolling sea ! it can tell of great exploits, of the glories of Denmark. We remember the names, the victorious Sehested and Gyldenlöwe ! We remember Hvittfeldt, who, to save the Danish fleet, blew up his ship, and flew to Heaven with the Danish flag. We think of the time, and the struggle of those days, and the hero who sprang from the Norwegian mountains to the defence of Denmark, Peter Tordenskjold. From the glorious surging sea, his name thunders from coast to coast.

There flashed a lightning through the powder-dust,
A thunder rumbled through the whispering age ;
A tailor-lad sprang from the tailor's board,
From Norway's coast sailed out a little sloop,
And over Northern seas there flew again
The Viking spirit, youthful, girt with steel.

‘Then there came a fresh breeze from Greenland's coast, a fragrance as from the land of Bethlehem ; it bore tidings of the Gospel light kindled by Hans Egede and his wife.

‘The half leaf here has therefore a gold ground ; the other half, which betokens sorrow, is ashen-grey with black specks, as if from fire sparks, as if from disease and pestilence.

‘In Copenhagen the plague is raging. The streets are empty ; the doors are barred, and round about are crosses marked with chalk ; inside is the plague, but where the cross is black, all are dead.

‘In the night the bodies are carried away, without the tolling-bell ; they take the half-dead from the streets with them ; the army wagons rumble, they are filled with corpses. But from the ale-houses sound the horrid songs of the drunkard and wild shrieks. In drink they seek to forget their bitter distress ; they would forget, and end—end ! Everything comes to an end. Here the page ends with the second time of distress and trial for Copenhagen.

‘King Frederick IV is still alive ; his hair has grown grey in the course of the years. From the window of the palace he looks out upon the stormy weather ; it is late in the year.

‘ In a little house by the Westgate a boy plays with his ball ; it flies up into the garret. The little one takes a tallow-candle and goes up to search for it ; he sets fire to the little house, and so to the whole street. It flares in the air, so that the clouds shine. The flames increase ! There is food for the fire ; there is hay and straw, bacon and tar, there are piles of firewood for the winter-time, and everything burns. There is weeping and shrieking and great confusion. In the tumult rides the old king, encouraging and commanding. There is blowing up with powder, and pulling down of houses. Now there is fire also in the north quarter, and the churches are burning, St. Peter’s and Our Lady’s. Listen to the bells playing their last tune : “ Turn away thy wrath, Lord God of Mercy ! ”

‘ Only the “ Round Tower ” and the castle are left standing ; round about them are smoking ruins. King Frederick is good to the people ; he comforts and feeds them ; he is with them ; he is the friend of the homeless. Blessed be Frederick IV !

‘ See this page now !

‘ See the gilded carriage with footmen round it, with armed riders before and behind it, coming from the castle, where an iron chain is stretched to prevent the people from coming too near. Every plebeian man must go over the square with bare head ; because of this not many are seen there, they avoid the place. There comes one now with downcast eyes, with hat in hand, and he is just the man of that time, whom we name with pride :

His words like a cleansing storm-wind rang
For sunshine in days yet to come ;
And smuggled-in fashions like grasshoppers sprang
In haste to escape and get home.

It is wit and humour in person ; it is Ludwig Holberg. The Danish theatre, the scene of his greatness, has been closed, as if it were the dwelling-place of infamy. All merriment is confined ; dance, song, and music are forbidden and banished. The dark side of religion is now in power.

“The Danish prince !” as his mother called him ; now comes his time with sunshiny weather, with the song of birds, with gladness and gaiety, and true Danish ways. King Frederick V is king. And the chain is taken away from the square beside the castle ; the Danish theatre is opened again ; there is laughter and pleasure and good humour. And the peasants hold their summer festival. It is a time of gaiety after the time of fast and oppression. The beautiful thrives, blossoming and bearing fruit in sound, in colour, and in creative art. Harken to Gretry's music ! Watch the acting of Londemann ! And Denmark's queen loves what is Danish. Louisa of England, beautiful and gentle ; God in his Heaven, bless you ! The sunbeams sing in lively chorus about the queens in the Danish land—Philippa, Elizabeth, Louisa !

‘The earthly parts have long been buried, but the souls live, and the names live. Again, England sends a royal bride, Matilda, so young, and so soon forsaken ! Poets will sing of thee in times to come, of thy youthful heart and time of trial. And song has power, an indescribable power through times and peoples. See the burning of the castle, King Christian's castle ! They try to save the best they can find. See, the dockyard men are dragging away a basket with silver plate and precious things. It is a great treasure ; but suddenly they see through the open door, where the flames are bright, a bronze bust of King Christian IV. Then they cast away the treasure they are carrying ; his image is much more to them ! that must be saved, however heavy it may be to carry. They know him from Ewald's song, from Hartmann's lovely melody.

‘There is power in the words and the song, and it shall sound even twice as strong for the poor Queen Matilda.

‘Now we shall turn farther on in our picture-book.

‘On Ulfeldt's Place stood the stone of shame ; where is there one on the earth like it ? By the Westgate a column was raised ; how many are there like it on the earth ?

‘The sunbeams kissed the boulder, which is the foundation under the “Column of Freedom”. All the church

bells rang, and the flags waved ; the people hurraed for the Crown-Prince Frederick. In the hearts and on the lips of old and young were the names of Bernstorff, Reventlow, Colbjörnson. With beaming eyes and thankful hearts they read the blessed inscription on the column :

“ The King has decreed it : Serfdom shall cease ; the agrarian laws shall be set in order and put in force, that the free yeoman may become brave and enlightened, diligent and good, a worthy citizen, and happy ! ”

“ What a day of sunshine ! What “ a Summer festival ” !

“ The spirits of light sang : “ The good grows ! The beautiful grows ! Soon the stone on Ulfeldt's Place will fall, but Freedom's column shall stand in sunshine, blessed by God, the king, and the people.”

We have a highway old and wide
And to the ends of earth it goes.

“ The open sea, open for friend or foe ; and the foe was there. It sailed up, the mighty English fleet ; a great power came against a little one. The fight was hard, but the people were brave.

Each stood firm with dauntless breath,
Stood and fought and met his death.

“ They won the admiration of the foe, and inspired the poets of Denmark. That day of battle is still commemorated with waving flags—Denmark's glorious second of April, the battle-day at the Roadstead.

“ Years passed. A fleet was seen in Öre Sound. Was it bound for Russia or Denmark ? No one knew, not even on board.

“ There is a legend in the mouth of the people, that that morning in Öre Sound, when the sealed orders were broken open and read, and instructions given to take the Danish fleet, a young captain stepped forward to his chief, a son of Britain, noble in word and deed : “ I swore,” was his word, “ that to my death I would fight for England's flag in open and honourable fight, but not to overpower the weak.” And with that he sprang overboard !

And so to Copenhagen sailed the fleet.

While far from where they fought the battle stark,
Lay he, the Captain—no one knows his name—

A corpse sea-cold, hidden by waters dark,
Until he drifted shorewards, and the Swedes.

Beneath the starry sky who cast their nets,
Found him, and bore him in their boat to land,
And—cast the dice to win his epaulettes !

‘ The enemy made for Copenhagen ; the town went up in flames, and we lost our fleet, but not our courage and our faith in God ; He casteth down, but He raiseth up again. Our wounds were healed as in the battles of Valhalla. Copenhagen’s history is rich in consolation.

Our faith has been from times of old
That God is ever Denmark’s friend,
If we hold firm, He too will hold,
And still the sun shine in the end.

‘ And soon the sun shone on the rebuilt city, on the rich cornfields, on the workers’ skill and art ; a blessed summer day of peace, where poetry raised her Fata Morgana so rich in colour, with the coming of Oehlenschläger.

‘ And in science a discovery was made, far greater than that of a goldhorn in olden days, a bridge of gold was found :

A bridge for thought to dart
At all times into other lands and nations.

‘ Hans Christian Oersted wrote his name there. And see ! beside the church by the castle was raised a building to which the poorest man and woman gave gladly their mite.

‘ You remember from the first part of the picture-book,’ said Godfather, ‘ the old stone-blocks, which rolled down from the mountains of Norway, and were carried down here on the ice ; they are lifted again from the sandy bottom at Thorwaldsen’s bidding, in marble beauty, lovely to see ! Remember what I have shown you and what I have told you ! The sand-bank in the sea raised itself up and became a breakwater for the harbour, bore Axel’s house, bore the bishop’s mansion and the king’s castle, and now it bears the temple of the beautiful. The words of the

curse have blown away, but what the children of the sunlight sang in their gladness, about the coming time, has been fulfilled. So many storms have gone past, but may come again and will again pass. The true and the good and the beautiful have the victory.

‘And with this the picture-book is finished ; but not the history of Copenhagen—far from it. Who knows what you yourself may yet live to see ! It has often looked black and blown a gale, but the sunshine is not yet blown away—that remains ; and stronger yet than the strongest sunshine is God ! Our Lord reigns over more than Copenhagen.’

So said Godfather, and gave me the book. His eyes shone, he was so certain of the thing. And I took the book so gladly, so proudly, and so carefully, just as I lately carried my little sister for the first time.

And Godfather said : ‘ You are quite welcome to show your picture-book to one or another ; you may also say that I have made, pasted, and drawn the whole work. But it is a matter of life or death, that they know at once from where I have got the idea of it. You know it, so tell it them ! The idea is due to the old oil-lamps, who just, on the last evening they burned, showed for the town’s gas-lights like a Fata Morgana, all that had been seen from the time the first lamp was lighted at the harbour, till this evening when Copenhagen was lighted both with oil and gas.

‘ You may show the book to whom you please, that is to say, to people with kind eyes and friendly hearts ; but if a death-horse should come, then close GODFATHER’S PICTURE-BOOK.’

THE DRYAD

WE are travelling to the Paris Exhibition.

Now we are there ! it was a flight, a rush, but quite without witchcraft ; we came by steam, in a ship and on a high road.

Our time is the fairy-tale time.

We are in the midst of Paris, in a great hotel, all the staircase is decorated with flowers, and soft carpets cover the steps.

Our room is comfortable, the balcony door is standing open to a big square. Down there the spring lives. It has driven to Paris, arriving at the same time as we ; it has come in the shape of a big, young chestnut tree, with fine, newly-opened leaves. How it is clothed in all the glory of spring, far beyond all the other trees in the square ! One of these has gone out of the number of the living trees, and lies prostrate on the ground, torn up by the roots. There, where it stood, the new chestnut tree shall be planted and grow.

As yet it stands high up in the heavy cart which brought it to Paris this morning from the country, several miles away. There it had stood for years, close beside a mighty oak, under which sat often the kindly old priest, who told stories to the listening children. The young chestnut tree listened with them : the Dryad inside it, who was still a child, could remember the time when the tree was so small that it only reached a little higher than the ferns and long blades of grass. They were then as big as they could be, but the tree grew and increased every year, drank air and sunshine, received dew and rain, and was shaken and lashed by the rough winds : this is necessary for education.

The Dryad rejoiced in her life and experiences, in the sunshine and the song of birds, but happy most of all at the voices of men ; she understood their language quite as well as she understood that of animals.

Butterflies, dragon-flies, and common flies—everything that could fly, paid her a visit ; they all gossipped together ;

told about the village, the vineyard, the wood, the old castle with the park, in which were canals and dams ; down there in the water, dwelt also living things, which in their own way could also fly from place to place under the water, beings with thought and knowledge ; they said nothing, so wise were they.

And the swallow, which had dipped down into the water, told about the lovely gold-fish, about the fat bream, the thick tench, and the old, moss-grown carp. The swallow gave a very good description, 'but one can see better for oneself,' she said ; but how should the Dryad ever get to see these beings ? She must content herself with being able to look out over the beautiful landscape and see the busy activity of men. That was lovely, but most lovely of all, when the old priest stood here under the oak, and told about France, and about the great deeds of men and women, whose names are named with admiration throughout all times. The Dryad heard of the shepherdess Joan of Arc, of Charlotte Corday ; she heard of olden times, of the times of Henry IV, and of Napoleon I, and of greatness and talent, right up to the present day. She heard names, each of which rang in the hearts of the people. France is a world-wide land ; a soil of intellect with a crater of freedom.

The village children listened devoutly, and the Dryad not less so ; she was a school-child like the others. She saw in the forms of the sailing clouds picture after picture of what she had heard told. The cloudy sky was her picture-book.

She felt herself so happy in the lovely France ; but had still a feeling that the birds, and every animal which could fly, were much more favoured than she. Even the fly could look about himself, far and wide, much farther than the Dryad's horizon.

France was so extensive and so glorious, but she could only see a little bit of it ; like a world, the country stretched out with vineyards, woods, and great towns, and of all of these Paris was the mightiest, and the most brilliant ; thither the birds could go, but never she.

Amongst the village children was a little girl, so poor and so ragged, but lovely to look at ; she was always

laughing and singing, and wreathing red flowers in her black hair.

‘Do not go to Paris!’ said the old priest. ‘Poor child! if you go there, it will be your ruin!’

And yet she went.

The Dryad often thought about her, for they had both the same desire and longing for the great city. Spring came, summer, autumn, winter; two or three years passed.

The Dryad’s tree bore its first chestnut blossoms, the birds twittered about it in the lovely sunshine. Then there came along the road a grand carriage with a stately lady; she, herself, drove the beautiful prancing horses; a smart little groom sat behind her. The Dryad knew her again, the old priest knew her again, shook his head, and said sorrowfully,

‘You did go there! it was your ruin! Poor Marie!’

‘She poor!’ thought the Dryad. ‘Why, what a change! she is dressed like a duchess! she became like this in the city of enchantment. Oh, if I were only there in all the splendour and glory! it even throws a light up into the clouds at night, when I look in the direction where I know the city is.’

Yes, thither, towards that quarter, the Dryad looked every evening, every night. She saw the glimmering mist on the horizon; she missed it in the bright, moonlight nights; she missed the floating clouds which showed her pictures of the city and of history.

The child grasps at its picture-book; the Dryad grasped at the cloud world, her book of thoughts.

The warm summer sky, free from clouds, was for her a blank page, and now for several days she had seen such a sky.

It was the warm summer-time, with sultry days without a breath of air. Every leaf, every flower, lay as in a doze, and men were like that too. Then clouds arose, and that in the quarter where at night the glimmering mist announced, ‘Here is Paris.’

The clouds arose, forming themselves like a whole mountain range, and scudded through the air, out over the whole landscape as far as the Dryad could see.

The clouds lay like enormous purple rocks, layer on

layer, high up in the sky. Flashes of lightning darted forth ; ' they also are servants of God the Lord,' the old priest had said. And there came a bluish dazzling flash, a blaze as if the sun itself had burst the purple rocks, and the lightning came down, and splintered the mighty old oak tree to the roots ; its crown was rent, its trunk was rent, it fell split asunder as if it spread itself out to embrace the messenger of light. No metal cannon can boom through the air and over the land at the birth of a royal child, as the thunder rumbled here at the death of the old oak tree. The rain streamed down : a refreshing breeze blew, the storm was past, and a Sunday calm fell on everything. The village people gathered round the fallen old oak ; the venerable priest spoke words in its praise, and an artist made a sketch of the tree itself as a lasting memorial.

' Everything passes away !' said the Dryad, ' passes away like the clouds, and returns no more.' The old priest came there no more ; the school roof had fallen, and the teachers' chair was gone. The children came no more, but the autumn came, winter came, and the spring came too, and in all the changing seasons the Dryad gazed towards the quarter where every evening and night, far away on the horizon, Paris shone like a shimmering mist. Out from it sped engine after engine, the one train after the other, rushing and roaring, at all hours ; in the evening and at midnight, in the morning, and through the whole of the daytime came the trains, and from every one and into every one crowded people from all the countries in the world ; a new wonder of the world had called them to Paris. How did this wonder reveal itself ?

' A splendid flower of art and industry,' they said, ' has sprung up on the barren soil of the Field of Mars ; a gigantic sunflower, from whose leaves one can learn geography and statistics, get the learning of a guild-master, be elevated in art and poetry, and learn the size and greatness of different countries.'

' A fairy-blossom,' said others, ' a many-coloured lotus-plant, which spreads its green leaves over the sand, like a velvet carpet, which has sprung forth in the early spring. The summer shall see it in all its glory ; the autumn storms will sweep it away ; neither root nor leaf shall be left.'

Outside the military school stretches the arena of war in times of peace ; the field without grass and stalk, a piece of sandy plain cut out of the African desert, where Fata Morgana shows her strange castles in the air and hanging gardens ; on the Field of Mars they now stand more brilliant and more wonderful, because genius had made them real.

‘The present-day Palace of Aladdin is reared,’ it was said. Day by day, and hour by hour, it unfolds its rich splendour more and more. Marble and colours adorn its endless halls. ‘Master Bloodless’ here moves his steel and iron limbs in the great machinery-hall. Works of art in metal, in stone, in weaving, proclaim the mental life which is stirring in all the countries of the world. Picture-galleries, masses of flowers, everything that intellect and hand can create in the workshops of the craftsman is here displayed to view. Even relics of ancient days from old castles and peat-mosses have met here.

The overwhelmingly great and varied sight must be reduced and condensed to a toy in order to be reproduced, understood, and seen as a whole.

The Field of Mars, like a great Christmas table, had on it an Aladdin’s Palace of industry and art, and round about it were little articles from all countries ; every nation found something to remind it of home. Here stood the Egyptian royal palace, here the caravanseraï of the desert ; the Bedouin coming from his sunny land swung past on his camel ; here extended Russian stables with magnificent fiery steeds from the steppes. The little thatched farm-house from Denmark stood with its ‘Dannebrog’ flag beside Gustav Vasa’s beautifully carved wooden house from Dalarne in Sweden ; American huts ; English cottages, French pavilions, kiosks, churches, and theatres lay oddly strewn about, and amidst all that, the fresh green turf, the clear, running water, flowering shrubs, rare trees, glass-houses where one could imagine oneself in a tropical forest ; whole rose-gardens, as if brought from Damascus, bloomed under the roof ; what colours, what fragrance ! Stalactite caves, artificially made, enclosing fresh and salt lakes, gave an exhibition from the kingdom of fish. One stood down on the bottom of the sea among fish and polypi.

All this, they said, the Field of Mars now bears and presents to view, and over this great richly-decked table moves, like a busy swarm of ants, the whole crowd of people, either on foot or drawn in little carriages ; all legs cannot stand such an exhausting promenade.'

They come here from early morning until late in the evening. Steamer after steamer, full of people, glides down the Seine. The number of carriages is constantly increasing, the crowds of people both on foot and on horseback are increasing, omnibuses and tramcars are stuffed and filled and covered with people,—all these streams move to one goal, 'The Paris Exhibition !' All the entrances are decorated with the French flag ; round about the bazaar-buildings wave the flags of all nations ; from the machinery-hall there is a whirring and humming ; the bells chime in melody from the towers ; the organs play inside the churches ; hoarse, snuffling songs from the Oriental cafés mingle with the music. It is like the kingdom of Babel, the language of Babel, a Wonder of the World. It was such indeed—so the reports about it said ; who did not hear them ? The Dryad knew everything that has been said here about the 'new wonder' in the city of cities.

'Fly, ye birds ! fly thither to look, come again and tell !' was the prayer of the Dryad.

The longing swelled to a wish, and became a life's thought ; and then one still silent night, when the full moon was shining, there flew out from its disk—the Dryad saw it—a spark, which fell glittering like a meteor ; and before the tree, whose branches shook as in a blast of wind, stood a mighty, radiant figure. It spoke in tones so soft and yet as strong as the trump of the Last Day, which kisses to life and calls to judgement.

'Thou shalt enter that place of enchantment, thou shalt there take root, feel the rushing currents, the air and the sunshine there. But thy lifetime shall be shortened, the series of years which awaited thee out here in the open, will shrink there to a small number of seasons. Poor Dryad ; it will be thy ruin ! thy longing will grow, thy yearning and thy craving will become stronger ! The tree itself will become a prison for thee ; thou wilt forsake thy dwelling, forsake thy nature, and fly away and mix with

human beings, and then thy years will dwindle down to half the lifetime of the ephemeral fly, only a single night ; thy life shall be extinguished, the leaves of the tree shall wither and be blown away, to return no more.'

Thus it sounded, thus it sang, and the brightness vanished, but not the longing and desire of the Dryad ; she trembled with expectation, in a fever of wild anticipation.

'I shall go to the city of cities !' she exultingly cried. 'Life begins, gathers like the cloud, and no one knows where it goes.'

In the grey dawn, when the moon grew pale and the clouds red, the hour of fulfilment struck, and the promise was redeemed.

People came with spades and poles ; they dug round the roots of the tree, deep down, right under it. Then a cart was brought up, drawn by horses, the tree, with the roots and clods of earth hanging to them, was lifted, wrapped in matting which made a warm foot-bag for it, then it was placed on the cart and bound fast. It was to go on a journey to Paris, to grow and remain there in the grandest city of France—the city of cities.

The leaves and branches of the chestnut tree trembled in the first moment of motion ; the Dryad trembled in the delight of expectation.

'Away ! away !' rang in every pulse-beat. 'Away ! away !' came the echo in trembling, fluttering words. The Dryad forgot to say 'Farewell' to her native place, to the waving grasses and the innocent daisies, which had looked up to her as to a great lady in our Lord's garden, a young Princess who played the shepherdess out in the country.

The chestnut tree was on the cart, it nodded with its branches 'Farewell', or 'Away', the Dryad knew not which ; she thought and dreamt of the wonderful, new, and yet so familiar scenes which should be unfolded before her. No childish heart in innocent delight, no passion-filled soul, has ever begun its journey to Paris more full of thought than she. 'Farewell !' became 'Away ! away !'

The wheels of the cart went round, the distant became near and was left behind ; the country changed, as the

clouds change ; new vineyards, forests, villages, villas, and gardens sprang up, came in sight, and rolled away again. The chestnut tree moved forward, the Dryad forward with it, engine after engine rushed close past each other and crossed each other ; the engines sent out clouds, which formed figures that told of the Paris they came from, and to which the Dryad was bound.

Everything round about knew and must understand whither her way led ; she thought that every tree she went past stretched out its branches to her, and begged : ‘ Take me with you ! take me with you ! ’ In every tree there was also a Dryad full of longing. What changes ! What a journey ! It seemed as if houses shot up out of the earth, more and more, closer and closer. Chimneys rose like flower-pots, placed above each other and side by side along the roofs ; great inscriptions with letters a yard long, painted figures on the walls from the ground-floor to the cornice shone forth.

‘ Where does Paris begin, and when shall I be in it ? ’ the Dryad asked herself. The crowds of people increased, the noise and bustle grew greater, carriage followed carriage, men on foot followed men on horse, and all round was shop upon shop, music and song, screaming and talking.

The Dryad in her tree was in the midst of Paris.

The great, heavy cart stopped in a little square, planted with trees, surrounded by high houses, where every window had its balcony. People looked down from there upon the young, fresh chestnut tree which was driven up, and which was now to be planted here, in place of the worn-out, uprooted tree, which lay stretched along the ground. People stood still in the square, and looked at the spring verdure, smiling and delighted ; the older trees, still only in bud, greeted her with rustling branches, ‘ Welcome ! welcome ! ’ and the fountain which threw its jets of water into the air, letting them splash again into the broad basin, allowed the wind to carry drops over to the newly-arrived tree, as if it would offer it a cup of welcome.

The Dryad felt that its tree was lifted from the cart and placed in its future position. The tree’s roots were hidden in the earth, fresh turf was laid over them ; blossoming shrubs and pots of flowers were planted like the tree ; here

was a whole garden plot right in the middle of the square. The dead, uprooted tree, killed by gas-fumes, kitchen-fumes, and all the plant-killing vapours of a town, was laid on the cart and driven away. The crowd looked on, children and old people sat on benches on the grass, and looked up among the leaves of the newly-planted tree. And we, who tell about it, stood on the balcony, looked down on the young spring verdure just come from the fresh country air, and said, as the old priest would have said : ' Poor Dryad ! '

' How happy I am ! ' said the Dryad, ' and yet I cannot quite realize it, nor quite express what I feel ; everything is as I expected it ! and yet not quite as I expected ! '

The houses were so high, and so close : the sun shone properly only upon one wall, and it was pasted over with posters and placards, before which the people stood and made the place crowded. Vehicles went past, light and heavy ; omnibuses, those over-filled houses on wheels, rolled along, riders trotted ahead, carts and carriages claimed the right to do the same. The Dryad wondered whether the tall houses, which stood so close, would also flit away, change their shapes like the clouds and glide aside, so that she could see into Paris, and out over it. Notre-Dame must show itself, and the Vendôme Column, and the Wonder which had called and was calling so many strangers hither. But the houses did not move.

It was still day, when the lamps were lighted, the gas-rays shone out from the shops and up among the branches of the tree ; it was like summer sunshine. The stars came out overhead, the same ones the Dryad had seen in her native place ; she thought she felt a breeze from there, so pure and mild. She felt herself elevated and strengthened, and found she had the power of seeing right out through all the leaves of the tree, and had feeling to the farthest tips of the roots. She felt herself in the living human world, looked at with kindly eyes ; round about were bustle and music, colours and lights.

From a side street sounded wind-instruments, and the dance-inspiring tunes of the barrel-organ. Yes, to the dance, to the dance ! it sounded—to gladness and the pleasure of life.

It was a music that must set men, horses, carriages, trees, and houses dancing, if they could dance. An intoxicating joy arose in the Dryad's breast.

'How delightful and beautiful!' she cried joyfully, 'I am in Paris!'

The day which came, the night which followed, and again the next day, offered the same sights, the same stir, the same life, changing and yet always the same.

'Now I know every tree and every flower in the square here! I know every house, balcony and shop here, where I am placed in this little cramped corner which hides the great, mighty town from me. Where are the triumphal arches, the boulevards, and the Wonder of the World? None of all these do I see! I am imprisoned as in a cage amongst the tall houses, which I now know by heart, with their placards, and posters, and sign-boards, all these plaster sweetmeats, which I have no taste for any longer. Where is all that I heard about, know about, longed for, and for the sake of which I wished to come here? What have I grasped, won, or found! I am longing as before, I see a life which I must grasp and live in! I must enter the ranks of the living! I must revel there, fly like the birds, see and understand, become wholly human, seize half a day of that in place of years of life in everyday fatigue and tediousness, in which I sicken and droop, and vanish like the mist on the meadow. I must shine like the cloud, shine in the sunlight of life, look out over everything like the cloud, and pass away like it,—no one knows whither!'

This was the Dryad's sigh, which lifted itself in prayer.

'Take my lifetime, and give me the half of the Ephemera's life! Free me from my imprisonment, give me human life, human joy for a short space, only this single night, if it must be so, and punish me thus for my presumptuous spirit, my longing for life! Annihilate me; let the fresh, young tree that encloses me then wither and fall, become ashes, and be scattered to the winds.'

A rustling passed through the branches of the tree; there came a titillating feeling, a trembling in every leaf, as if fire ran through it or out of it, a blast went through the crown of the tree, and in the midst of it arose a woman's

form,—the Dryad herself. In the same instant she sat under the gas-illuminated, leafy branches, young and beautiful, like poor Marie, to whom it was said, ‘The great city will be thy ruin!’

The Dryad sat by the foot of the tree, by the door of her house, which she had locked and of which she had thrown away the key. So young, so beautiful! The stars saw her and twinkled. The gas-lamps saw her and beamed and beckoned! How slender she was and yet strong, a child and yet a full-grown maiden. Her clothes were fine as silk, and green as the fresh, newly-unfolded leaves in the crown of the tree; in her nut-brown hair hung a half-blown chestnut blossom; she looked like the goddess of Spring.

Only a short minute she sat motionless and still, then she sprang up, and ran like a gazelle from the place, and disappeared round the corner. She ran, she sprang like the light from a mirror which is carried in the sunshine, the light which with every motion is cast now here and now there; and if one had looked closely, and been able to see what there was to see, how wonderful! At every place where she stopped for a moment, her clothes and her figure were changed according to the character of the place, or the house whose lamp shone upon her.

She reached the Boulevards; a sea of light streamed from the gas in the lamps, shops, and cafés. Young and slender trees stood here in rows; each one hid its Dryad from the beams of the artificial sunlight. The whole of the long, never-ending pavement was like one great assembly-room; tables stood spread with refreshments of all kinds, from champagne and chartreuse down to coffee and beer. There was a display of flowers, of pictures, statues, books, and many-coloured fabrics. From the throng under the tall houses she looked out over the alarming stream under the rows of trees: there rushed a tide of rolling carriages, cabriolets, coaches, omnibuses, and cabs, gentlemen on horseback, and marching regiments,—it was risking life and limb to cross over to the opposite side. Now shone a blue light, then the gas-lights were supreme, and suddenly a rocket shot up; whence and whither? Certainly, it was the highway of the great city of the world.

Here sounded soft Italian melodies, there Spanish songs, accompanied by the beating of castanets, but strongest, and swelling above all, sounded the musical-box melodies of the moment, the tickling can-can music, unknown to Orpheus, and never heard by beautiful Helen; even the wheelbarrow must have danced on its one wheel if it could have danced. The Dryad danced, floated, flew, changing in colour like the honey-bird in the sunshine; each house and the world within it gave fresh tints to her. As the gleaming lotus-flower, torn from its root, is borne by the stream on its eddies, she drifted; and wherever she stood, she was again a new shape, therefore no one could follow her, recognize and watch her.

Like cloud-pictures everything flew past her, face after face, but not a single one did she know; she saw no form from her own home. There shone in her thoughts two bright eyes, and she thought of Marie, poor Marie! the happy, ragged child with the red flower in her black hair. She was in the city of the world, rich, and dazzling, as when she drove past the priest's house, the Dryad's tree, and the old oak. She was here, no doubt, in the deafening noise; perhaps she had just got out of that magnificent coach waiting yonder; splendid carriages stood here with laced coachmen, and silk-stockinged footmen. The grand people alighting were all women, richly dressed ladies. They went through the open lattice-door, up the high, broad stairs, which led to a building with white marble columns. Was this perhaps the 'Wonder of the World'? Then certainly Marie was there!

'Sancta Maria!' they sang within; the clouds of incense floated under the lofty painted and gilded arches, where twilight reigned. It was the Church of the Madeleine. Dressed in black, in costly materials made after the latest fashion, ladies of the highest society glided over the polished floor. Coats of arms were on the silver clasps of the prayer-books bound in velvet, and on the fine, strongly-scented handkerchiefs trimmed with costly Brussels lace. Some of the ladies knelt in silent prayer before the altars, others sought the confessionals. The Dryad felt a restlessness, a fear, as if she had entered a place where she ought not to have set foot. Here was the home of silence, the palace of

secrets ; all was whispered and confided without a sound being heard.

The Dryad saw herself disguised in silk and veil, resembling in form the other rich and high-born ladies ; was each of them a child of longing like herself ?

There sounded a sigh, so painfully deep ; did it come from the confessional corner, or from the breast of the Dryad ? She drew her veil closer round her. She breathed the incense and not the fresh air. Here was no place for her longing.

Away ! away ! in flight without rest ! The Ephemera has no rest ; its flight is its life !

She was again outside under the blazing gas-lamps by the splendid fountain. ‘ All the streams of water will not be able to wash away the innocent blood which has been shed here.’ So it has been said.

Foreigners stood here and talked loudly and with animation, as no one dared to do in the High Court of Mystery, from which the Dryad came.

A large stone-slab was turned and lifted up ; she did not understand this ; she saw an open entrance to the depths of the earth ; into this people descended from the starlit sky, from the sunshiny gas-flames, from all the stirring life.

‘ I am afraid of this ! ’ said one of the women who stood there ; ‘ I dare not go down ; I don’t care either about seeing the sight ! Stay with me ! ’

‘ And go back home,’ said the man, ‘ go from Paris without having seen the most remarkable thing, the real wonder of the present time, called into being by the talent and will of a single man ! ’

‘ I shall not go down there,’ was the answer.

‘ The wonder of the present age,’ they said. The Dryad heard and understood it ; the goal of her greatest longing was reached, and here was the entrance, down in the depths under Paris ; she had not thought of this, but when she heard it now, and saw the foreigners going down, she followed them. The spiral staircase was of cast iron, broad and commodious. A lamp gleamed down there, and another one still farther down.

They stood in a labyrinth of endlessly long intersecting

halls and arched passages ; all the streets and lanes of Paris were to be seen here, as in a dim mirror, the names could be read, every house above had its number here, its root, which struck down under the empty, macadamized footway, which ran along by a broad canal with a stream of rolling mud. Higher up, along the arches, was led the fresh running water, and above all hung, like a net, gas-pipes and telegraph wires. Lamps shone in the distance, like reflected images from the metropolis above. Now and then was heard a noisy rumbling overhead ; it was the heavy wagons which drove over the bridges above.

Where was the Dryad ?

You have heard of the catacombs ; they are but the faintest of outlines compared to this new subterranean world, the wonder of the present day, the drains of Paris. Here stood the Dryad and not out in the world's exhibition on the Field of Mars. She heard exclamations of astonishment, admiration and appreciation.

'From down here,' they said, 'health and years of life are growing for thousands and thousands up above ! Our time is the time of progress with all its blessings.'

That was the opinion and the talk of the people, but not of the creatures who lived and dwelt and had been born here, the rats ; they squeaked from the rifts in a piece of old wall, so clearly, distinctly and intelligibly to the Dryad.

A big old he-rat, with his tail bitten off, piercingly squeaked his feelings, his discomfort, and his honest opinion, and the family gave him support for every word.

'I am disgusted with this nonsense, this human nonsense, this ignorant talk ! Oh yes, it is very fine here now with gas and petroleum ! I don't eat that kind of thing ! It has become so fine and bright here that one is ashamed of oneself, and does not know why. If we only lived in the time of tallow-candles ! it isn't so far back either ! That was a romantic time, as they call it !'

'What is that you are talking about ?' said the Dryad. 'I did not see you before. What are you talking about ?'

'The good old days,' said the rat, 'the happy days of great-grandfather and great-grandmother rats ! In those days it was something to come down here. It was a rat's

nest different from the whole of Paris ! Mother Plague lived down here ; she killed people, but never rats. Robbers and smugglers breathed freely down here. Here was the place of refuge for the most interesting personages, who are now only seen in melodramas in the theatre up above. The time of romance is gone in our rat's nest too ; we have got fresh air and petroleum down here.'

So squeaked the rat ! squeaked against the new times in favour of the old days with Mother Plague.

A carriage stood there, a kind of open omnibus with swift, little horses ; the party got into it, and rushed along the Boulevard Sebastopol, the subterranean one : right above stretched the well-known Parisian one full of people.

The carriage disappeared in the dim light ; the Dryad also vanished, rose up into the gas-light and the fresh free air ; there, and not down in the crossing arches and their suffocating air, could the wonder be found, the Wonder of the World, that which she sought in her short night of life ; it must shine stronger than all the gas-lights up here, stronger than the moon which now glided forth. Yes, certainly ! and she saw it yonder, it beamed before her, it twinkled and glittered like the star of Venus in the sky.

She saw a shining gate, opening into a little garden, full of light and dancing melodies. Gas-jets shone here as borders round little quiet lakes and pools, where artificial water-plants, cut out of tin-plate bent and painted, glittered in the light, and threw jets of water yard-high out of their chalices. Beautiful weeping-willows, real weeping-willows of the spring-time, drooped their fresh branches like a green transparent yet concealing veil.

Here, amongst the bushes, blazed a bonfire ; its red glow shone over small, half-dark, silent arbours, permeated with tones, with a music thrilling to the ear, captivating, alluring, chasing the blood through the veins.

She saw young women, beautiful in festal attire, with trusting smiles, and the light laughing spirit of youth, a 'Marie', with a rose in the hair, but without carriage and footmen. How they floated, how they whirled in the wild dance ! As if bitten by the Tarantella, they sprang

and laughed and smiled, blissfully happy, ready to embrace the whole world.

The Dryad felt herself carried away in the dance. About her slender little foot fitted the silken shoe, chestnut-brown, like the ribbon which floated from her hair over her uncovered shoulders. The green silk garment waved in great folds, but did not conceal the beautifully formed limb with the pretty foot, which seemed as if it wished to describe magic circles in the air. Was she in the enchanted garden of Armida? What was the place called? The name shone outside in gas-jets,

‘MABILLE.’

Sounds of music and clapping of hands, rockets, and murmuring water, popping of champagne corks mingled here. The dance was wildly bacchanalian, and over the whole sailed the moon, with a rather wry face, no doubt. The sky was cloudless, clear and serene; it seemed as if one could see straight into Heaven from ‘Mabille’.

A consuming desire of life thrilled through the Dryad; it was like an opium trance.

Her eyes spoke, her lips spoke, but the words were not heard for the sound of flutes and violins. Her partner whispered words in her ear, they trembled in time to the music of the can-can; she did not understand them,—we do not understand them either. He stretched his arms out towards her and about her, and only embraced the transparent, gas-filled air.

The Dryad was carried away by the stream of air, as the wind bears a rose-leaf. On high before her she saw a flame, a flashing light, high up on a tower. The light shone from the goal of her longing, from the red lighthouse on the ‘Fata Morgana’ of the Field of Mars. She fluttered about the tower; the workmen thought it was a butterfly which they saw dropping down to die in its all too early arrival.

The moon shone, gas-lights and lamps shone in the great halls and in the scattered buildings of all lands, shone over the undulating greensward, and the rocks made by the ingenuity of men, where the waterfall poured down by the strength of ‘Mr. Bloodless’. The depths of the ocean and of the fresh water, the realms of the fishes were opened

here ; one was at the bottom of the deep pool, one was down in the ocean, in a diving-bell. The water pressed against the thick glass walls above and around. The polypi, fathom-long, flexible, winding, quivering, living arms, clutched, heaved, and grew fast to the bottom of the sea.

A great flounder lay thoughtfully close by, stretched itself out in comfort and ease : the crab crawled like an enormous spider over it, whilst shrimps darted about with a haste, a swiftness, as if they were the moths and butterflies of the sea.

In the fresh water grew water-lilies, sedges, and rushes. The gold-fishes had placed themselves in rows, like red cows in the field, all with the heads in the same direction, so as to get the current in their mouths. Thick fat tench stared with stupid eyes towards the glass walls ; they knew that they were at the Paris Exhibition ; they knew that they had made the somewhat difficult journey hither, in barrels filled with water, and had been land-sick on the railway, just as people are sea-sick on the sea. They had come to see the Exhibition, and so they saw it from their own fresh or salt water box, saw the throng of men which moved past from morning to night. All the countries of the world had sent and exhibited their natives, so that the old tench and bream, the nimble perch and the moss-grown carp should see these beings and give their opinions upon the species.

‘ They are shell-fish ! ’ said a muddy little bleak. ‘ They change their shells two or three times in the day, and make sounds with their mouths—talking, they call it. We don’t change, and we make ourselves understood in an easier way ; movements with the corners of the mouth, and a stare with the eyes ! We have many points of superiority over mankind ! ’

‘ They have learnt swimming, though,’ said a little fresh-water fish. ‘ I am from the big lake ; men go into the water in the hot season there, but first they put off their shells, and then they swim. The frogs have taught them that, they push with the hind-legs, and paddle with the fore-legs ; they can’t keep it up long. They would like to imitate us, but they don’t get near it. Poor men ! ’

And the fishes stared; they imagined that the whole crowd of people they had seen in the strong daylight was still moving here; yes, they were convinced that they still saw the same forms which, so to speak, first struck their nerves of apprehension.

A little perch, with beautifully striped skin, and an enviable round back, asserted that the 'human mud' was there still; he saw it.

'I also see it; it is so distinct!' said a jaundice-yellow tench. 'I see plainly the beautiful well-shaped human figure, "high-legged lady" or whatever it was they called her; she had our mouth and staring eyes, two balloons behind, and an umbrella let down in front, a great quantity of hanging duck-weed dingling and dangling. She should put it all off, go like us in the guise of nature, and she would look like a respectable tench, as far as human beings can do so!'

'What became of him—he on the string, the male—they dragged?'

'He rode in a bath-chair, sat with paper, pen and ink, and wrote everything down. What was he doing? They called him a reporter.'

'He is riding about there still,' said a moss-grown maiden carp, with the trials of the world in her throat, so that she was hoarse with it; she had once swallowed a fish-hook, and still swam patiently about with it in her throat.

'A reporter,' she said, 'that is, speaking plainly and fishily, a kind of cuttle-fish among men.'

So the fishes talked in their own manner. But in the midst of the artificial grotto sounded the blows of hammers and the songs of the work-people; they must work at night, so that everything might be finished as soon as possible. They sang in the Dryad's summer night's dream, she herself stood there, ready to fly and vanish.

'They are gold-fish!' said she, and nodded to them. 'So I have managed to see you after all! I know you! I have known you a long time! The swallow has told me about you in my home country. How pretty you are, how glittering and charming! I could kiss each and all of you! I know the others also! That is certainly the fat tench;

that one there, the dainty bream ; and here, the old moss-grown carp ! I know you ! but you don't know me ! '

The fish stared and did not understand a single word ; they stared out into the dim light. The Dryad was there no longer, she stood out in the open air, where the world's ' wonder-blossoms ' from the different countries gave out their fragrance, from the land of rye-bread, from the coast of the stock-fish, the empire of russia leather, the river-banks of Eau-de-Cologne, and from the eastern land of the essence of roses.

When, after a ball, we drive home, half-asleep, the tunes we have heard still sound distinctly in our ears ; we could sing each and all of them. And as in the eye of a murdered man, the last thing the glance rested on is said to remain photographed on it for a time, so here in the night the bustle and glare of the day was not extinguished. The Dryad felt it and knew that it would roll on in the same way through the coming day. The Dryad stood amongst the fragrant roses, thinking that she recognized them from her home, roses from the park of the castle and from the priest's garden. She also saw the red pomegranate flower here ; Marie had worn one like it in her coal-black hair.

Memories from the home of her childhood out in the country flashed through her mind ; she drank in the sights round about her with greedy eyes, whilst feverish restlessness possessed her, and carried her through the wonderful halls.

She felt tired, and this tiredness increased. She had a longing to rest upon the soft Eastern cushions and carpets spread around, or to lean against the weeping-willow down by the clear water, and plunge herself into that.

But the Ephemera has no rest. The day was only a few minutes from the end.

Her thoughts trembled, her limbs trembled, she sank down on the grass, by the rippling water.

' Thou springest from the earth with lasting life ! ' said she ; ' cool my tongue, give me refreshment ! '

' I am not the living fountain ! ' answered the water. I flow by machinery ! '

‘ Give me of thy freshness, thou green grass,’ begged the Dryad. ‘ Give me one of the fragrant flowers ! ’

‘ We die when we are broken off ! ’ answered the grass and flowers.

‘ Kiss me, thou fresh breeze ! only one single kiss of life ! ’

‘ Soon the sun will kiss the clouds red ! ’ said the wind, ‘ and then wilt thou be amongst the dead, passed away, as all the splendour here will pass away, before the year is gone, and I can again play with the light, loose sand in the square here, and blow the dust along over the ground, dust in the air, dust ! all dust ! ’

The Dryad felt a dread, like that of the woman who in the bath has cut an artery and is bleeding to death, but while bleeding wishes still to live. She raised herself, came some steps forward, and again sank down in front of a little church. The door stood open, candles burned on the altar, and the organ pealed.

What music ! such tones the Dryad had never heard, and yet she seemed to hear in them well-known voices. They came from the depths of the heart of the whole creation. She thought she heard the rustling of the old oak tree, she thought she heard the old priest talking about great deeds, and about famous names, and of what God’s creatures had power to give as a gift to future times, and must give it in order to win, by that means, eternal life for itself.

The tones of the organ swelled and pealed, and spoke in song : ‘ Thy longing and desire uprooted thee from thy God-given place. It became thy ruin, poor Dryad ! ’

The organ tones, soft and mild, sounded as if weeping, dying away in tears.

The clouds shone red in the sky. The wind whistled and sang, ‘ Pass away, ye Dead, the sun is rising ! ’

The first beam fell on the Dryad. Her form shone in changing colours, like the soap-bubble when it breaks, vanishes and becomes a drop, a tear which falls to the ground and disappears.

Poor Dryad ! a dew-drop, only a tear, shed, vanished !

The sun shone over the ‘ Fata Morgana ’ on the Field of

Mars, shone over the Great Paris, over the little square with the trees and the splashing fountain, amongst the tall houses, where the chestnut tree stood, but with drooping branches, withered leaves, the tree which only yesterday lifted itself as fresh and full of life as the spring itself. Now it was dead, they said. The Dryad had gone, passed away like the cloud, no one knew whither.

There lay on the ground a withered, broken chestnut flower; the holy water of the Church had no power to call it to life. The foot of man soon trod it down into the dust.

The whole of this actually happened, we saw it ourselves at the Paris Exhibition in 1867, in our own time, in the great, wonderful, time of fairy-tale.

POULTRY MEG'S FAMILY

POULTRY MEG was the only human occupant in the handsome new house which was built for the fowls and ducks on the estate. It stood where the old baronial mansion had stood, with its tower, crow-step gable, moat, and drawbridge. Close by was a wilderness of trees and bushes; the garden had been here and had stretched down to a big lake, which was now a bog. Rooks, crows, and jackdaws flew screaming and cawing over the old trees, a perfect swarm of birds. They did not seem to decrease, but rather to increase, although one shot amongst them. One could hear them inside the poultry-house, where Poultry Meg sat with the ducklings running about over her wooden shoes. She knew every fowl, and every duck, from the time it crept out of the egg; she was proud of her fowls and ducks, and proud of the splendid house which had been built for them.

Her own little room was clean and neat, that was the wish of the lady to whom the poultry-house belonged; she often came there with distinguished guests and showed them the 'barracks of the hens and ducks', as she called it.

Here was both a wardrobe and an easy-chair, and even

a chest of drawers, and on it was a brightly polished brass plate on which was engraved the word 'Grubbe', which was the name of the old, noble family who had lived here in the mansion. The brass plate was found when they were digging here, and the parish clerk had said that it had no other value except as an old relic. The clerk knew all about the place and the old time, for he had knowledge from books; there were so many manuscripts in his table-drawer. He had great knowledge of the old times; but the oldest of the crows knew more perhaps, and screamed about it in his own language, but it was crow-language, which the clerk did not understand, clever as he might be. The bog could steam after a warm summer day so that it seemed as if a lake lay behind the old trees, where the crows, rooks, and jackdaws flew; so it had appeared when the Knight Grubbe had lived here, and the old manor-house stood with its thick, red walls. The dog's chain used to reach quite past the gateway in those days; through the tower, one went into a stone-paved passage which led to the rooms; the windows were narrow and the panes small, even in the great hall, where the dancing took place, but in the time of the last Grubbe there was no dancing as far back as one could remember, and yet there lay there an old kettle-drum which had served as part of the music. Here stood a curious carved cupboard, in which rare flower-bulbs were kept, for Lady Grubbe was fond of gardening, and cultivated trees and plants; her husband preferred riding out to shoot wolves and wild boars, and his little daughter Marie always went with him. When she was only five years old, she sat proudly on her horse, and looked round bravely with her big black eyes. It was her delight to hit out with her whip amongst the hounds; her father would have preferred to see her hit out amongst the peasant boys who came to look at the company.

The peasant in the clay house close to the manor had a son called Sören, the same age as the little noble lady. He knew how to climb, and had always to go up and get the bird's nests for her. The birds screamed as loud as they could scream, and one of the biggest of them cut him over the eye, so that the blood poured out. It was thought at first that the eye had been destroyed; but it was very

little damaged after all. Marie Grubbe called him *her* Sören—that was a great favour, and it was a good thing for his father, poor John ; he had committed a fault one day, and was to be punished by riding the wooden horse. It stood in the yard, with four poles for legs, and a single narrow plank for a back ; on this John had to ride astride, and have some heavy bricks fastened to his legs, so that he might not sit too comfortably ; he made horrible grimaces, and Sören wept and implored little Marie to interfere ; immediately she ordered that Sören's father should be taken down, and when they did not obey her she stamped on the stone pavement, and pulled her father's coat sleeve till it was torn. She would have her way, and she got it, and Sören's father was taken down.

The Lady Grubbe, who now came up, stroked her little daughter's hair, and looked at her affectionately ; Marie did not understand why. She would go to the hounds, and not with her mother, who went into the garden, down to the lake, where the white and yellow water-lilies bloomed, and the bulrushes nodded amongst the reeds. She looked at all this luxuriance and freshness. 'How pleasant !' said she. There stood in the garden a rare tree which she herself had planted ; it was called a 'copper-beech', a kind of blackmoor amongst the other trees, so dark brown were the leaves ; it must have strong sunshine, otherwise in continual shade it would become green like the other trees and so lose its distinctive character. In the high chestnut-trees were many birds' nests, as well as in the bushes and the grassy meadows. It seemed as if the birds knew that they were protected here, for here no one dared to fire a gun.

The little Marie came here with Sören ; he could climb, as we know, and he fetched both eggs and young downy birds. The birds flew about in terror and anguish, little ones and big ones ! Peewits from the field, rooks, crows, and jackdaws from the high trees, screamed and shrieked ; it was a shriek exactly the same as their descendants shriek in our own day.

'What are you doing, children ?' cried the gentle lady. 'This is ungodly work !'

Sören stood ashamed, and even the high-born little girl

looked a little abashed, but then she said, shortly and sulkily, 'My father lets me do it!'

'Afar! afar!' screamed the great blackbirds, and flew off, but they came again next day, for their home was here.

But the quiet, gentle lady did not stay long at home here; our Lord called her to Himself, with Him she was more at home than in the mansion, and the church bells tolled solemnly when her body was carried to the church. Poor men's eyes were wet, for she had been good to them. When she was gone, no one cared for her plants, and the garden ran to waste.

Sir Grubbe was a hard man, they said, but his daughter, although she was so young, could manage him; he had to laugh, and she got her way. She was now twelve years old, and strongly built; she looked through and through people, with her big black eyes, rode her horse like a man, and shot her gun like a practised hunter.

One day there came great visitors to the neighbourhood, the very greatest, the young king and his half-brother and comrade Lord Ulrik Frederick Gyldenlöwe; they wanted to hunt the wild boar there, and would stay some days at Sir Grubbe's castle.

Gyldenlöwe sat next Marie at table; he took her round the neck and gave her a kiss, as if they had been relations, but she gave him a slap on the mouth and said that she could not bear him. At that there was great laughter, as if it was an amusing thing.

And it may have been amusing too, for five years after, when Marie had completed her seventeenth year, a messenger came with a letter; Lord Gyldenlöwe proposed for the hand of the noble lady; that was something!

'He is the grandest and most gallant gentleman in the kingdom!' said Sir Grubbe. 'That is not to be despised.'

'I don't care much about him!' said Marie Grubbe, but she did not reject the grandest man in the country, who sat by the king's side.

Silver plate, woollen and linen went with a ship to Copenhagen; she travelled overland in ten days. The outfit had contrary winds, or no wind at all; four months passed before it arrived, and when it did come Lady Gyldenlöwe had departed.

'I would rather lie on coarse sacking, than in his silken bed!' said she; 'I'd rather walk on my bare feet than drive with him in a carriage!'

Late one evening in November, two women came riding into the town of Aarhus; it was Lady Gyldenlöwe and her maid: they came from Veile, where they had arrived from Copenhagen by ship. They rode up to Sir Grubbe's stone mansion. He was not delighted with the visit. She got hard words, but she got a bedroom as well; got nice food for breakfast, but not nice words, for the evil in her father was roused against her, and she was not accustomed to that. She was not of a gentle temper, and as one is spoken to, so one answers. She certainly did answer, and spoke with bitterness and hate about her husband, with whom she would not live; she was too honourable for that.

So a year went past, but it did not pass pleasantly. There were evil words between father and daughter, and that there should never be. Evil words have evil fruit. What could be the end of this?

'We two cannot remain under the same roof,' said the father one day. 'Go away from here to our old manor-house, but rather bite your tongue out than set lies going!'

So these two separated; she went with her maid to the old manor-house, where she had been born and brought up, and where the gentle pious lady, her mother, lay in the church vault; an old cowherd lived in the house, and that was the whole establishment. Cobwebs hung in the rooms, dark and heavy with dust; in the garden everything was growing wild. Hops and other climbing plants twisted a net between the trees and bushes; and hemlock and nettles grew larger and stronger. The copper beech was overgrown by the others and now stood in shade, its leaves were now as green as the other common trees, and its glory had departed. Rooks, crows, and daws flew in thick swarms over the high chestnut-trees, and there was a cawing and screaming, as if they had some important news to tell each other: now she is here again, the little one who had caused their eggs and their young ones to be stolen from them. The thief himself, who had fetched them, now climbed on a leafless tree, sat on the high mast, and got good blows from the rope's end if he did not behave himself.

The clerk told all this in our own time ; he had collected it and put it together from books and manuscripts ; it lay with many more manuscripts in the table-drawer.

‘ Up and down is the way of the world ! ’ said he, ‘ it is strange to hear ! ’ And we shall hear how it went with Marie Grubbe, but we will not forget Poultry Meg, who sits in her grand hen-house in our time ; Marie Grubbe sat there in her time, but not with the same spirit as old Poultry Meg.

The winter passed, spring and summer passed, and then again came the stormy autumn-time, with the cold, wet sea-fogs. It was a lonely life, a wearisome life there in the old manor-house. So Marie Grubbe took her gun and went out on the moors, and shot hares and foxes, and whatever birds she came across. Out there she met oftener than once noble Sir Palle Dyre from Nørrebæk, who was also wandering about with his gun and his dogs. He was big and strong, and boasted about it when they talked together. He could have dared to measure himself with the late Mr. Brockenhus of Egeskov, of whose strength there were still stories. Palle Dyre had, following his example, caused an iron chain with a hunting-horn to be hung at his gate, and when he rode home he caught the chain, and lifted himself with the horse from the ground, and blew the horn.

‘ Come yourself and see it, Dame Marie ! ’ said he, ‘ there is fresh air blowing at Nørrebæk ! ’

When she went to his house is not recorded, but on the candlesticks in Nørrebæk Church one can read that they were given by Palle Dyre and Marie Grubbe of Nørrebæk Castle.

Bodily strength had Palle Dyre : he drank like a sponge ; he was like a tub that could never be filled ; he snored like a whole pig-sty, and he looked red and bloated.

‘ He is piggish and rude ! ’ said Dame Palle Dyre, Grubbe’s daughter. Soon she was tired of the life, but that did not make it any better. One day the table was laid, and the food was getting cold ; Palle Dyre was fox-hunting and the lady was not to be found. Palle Dyre came home at midnight, Dame Dyre came neither at midnight nor in the morning, she had turned her back on Nørrebæk, had ridden away without greeting or farewell.

It was grey wet weather ; the wind blew cold, and a flock of black screaming birds flew over her, they were not so homeless as she.

First she went south, quite up to Germany ; a couple of gold rings with precious stones were turned into money ; then she went east, and then turned again to the west ; she had no goal before her eyes, and was angry with every one, even with the good God Himself, so wretched was her mind ; soon her whole body became wretched too, and she could scarcely put one foot before another. The peewit flew up from its tussock when she fell over it : the bird screamed as it always does, ' You thief ! You thief ! ' She had never stolen her neighbour's goods, but birds' eggs and young birds she had had brought to her when she was a little girl ; she thought of that now.

From where she lay she could see the sand-hills by the shore ; fishermen lived there, but she could not get so far, she was so ill. The great white sea-mews came flying above her and screamed as the rooks and crows screamed over the garden at home. The birds flew very near her, and at last she imagined that they were coal-black, but then it became night before her eyes. When she again opened her eyes she was being carried ; a big, strong fellow had taken her in his arms. She looked straight into his bearded face ; he had a scar over his eye, so that the eyebrow appeared to be divided in two. He carried her, miserable as she was, to the ship, where he got a rating from the captain for it.

The day following, the ship sailed ; Marie Grubbe was not put ashore, so she went with it. But she came back again, no doubt ? Yes, but when and where ?

The clerk could also tell about this, and it was not a story which he himself had put together. He had the whole strange story from a trustworthy old book ; we ourselves can take it out and read it.

The Danish historian, Ludwig Holberg, who has written so many useful books and the amusing comedies from which we can get to know his time and people, tells in his letters of Marie Grubbe, where and how he met her ; it is well worth hearing about, but we will not forget Poultry Meg, who sits so glad and comfortable in her grand hen-house.

The ship sailed away with Marie Grubbe ; it was there we left off.

Years and years went past.

The plague was raging in Copenhagen ; it was in the year 1711. The Queen of Denmark went away to her German home, the king quitted the capital, every one who could, hastened away. The students, even if they had board and lodging free, left the city. One of them, the last who still remained at the so-called Borch's College, close by Regensen, also went away. It was two o'clock in the morning ; he came with his knapsack, which was filled more with books and manuscripts than with clothes. A damp, clammy mist hung over the town ; not a creature was to be seen in the whole street ; round about on the doors and gates crosses were marked to show that the plague was inside, or that the people were dead. No one was to be seen either in the broader, winding Butcher's Row, as the street was called which led from the Round Tower to the King's Castle. A big ammunition wagon rumbled past ; the driver swung his whip and the horses went off at a gallop, the wagon was full of dead bodies. The young student held his hand before his face, and smelt at some strong spirits which he had on a sponge in a brass box.

From a tavern in one of the streets came the sound of singing and unpleasant laughter, from people who drank the night through, to forget that the plague stood before the door and would have them to accompany him in the wagon with the other corpses. The student turned his steps towards the castle bridge, where one or two small ships lay ; one of them was weighing anchor to get away from the plague-stricken city.

'If God spares our lives and we get wind for it, we are going to Grönsund in Falster,' said the skipper, and asked the name of the student who wished to go with him.

'Ludwig Holberg,' said the student, and the name sounded like any other name ; now the sound is one of the proudest names in Denmark ; at that time he was only a young, unknown student.

The ship glided past the castle. It was not yet clear morning when they came out into the open water. A light

breeze came along, and the sails swelled, the young student set himself with his face to the wind, and fell asleep, and that was not quite the wisest thing to do. Already on the third morning the ship lay off Falster.

‘Do you know any one in this place, with whom I could live cheaply?’ Holberg asked the captain.

‘I believe that you would do well to go to the ferry-woman in Borrehouse,’ said he. ‘If you want to be very polite, her name is Mother Sören Sörensen Möller! yet it may happen that she will fly into a rage if you are too polite to her! Her husband is in custody for a crime; she herself manages the ferry-boat, she has fists of her own!’

The student took his knapsack and went to the ferry-house. The door was not locked, he lifted the latch, and went into a room with a brick-laid floor, where a bench with a big leather coverlet was the chief article of furniture. A white hen with chickens was fastened to the bench, and had upset the water-dish, and the water had run across the floor. No one was here, or in the next room, only a cradle with a child in it. The ferry-boat came back with only one person in it, whether man or woman was not easy to say. The person was wrapped in a great cloak, and wore a fur cap like a hood on the head. The boat lay to.

It was a woman who got out and came into the room. She looked very imposing when she straightened her back; two proud eyes sat under the black eyebrows. It was Mother Sören, the ferry-woman; rooks, crows, and daws would scream out another name which we know better.

She looked morose, and did not seem to care to talk, but so much was said and settled, that the student arranged for board and lodging for an indefinite time, whilst things were so bad in Copenhagen. One or other honest citizen from the neighbouring town came regularly out to the ferry-house. Frank the cutler and Sivert the excise-man came there; they drank a glass of ale and talked with the student. He was a clever young man, who knew his ‘Practica’, as they called it; he read Greek and Latin, and was well up in learned subjects.

‘The less one knows, the less one is burdened with it,’ said Mother Sören.

‘You have to work hard!’ said Holberg, one day when

she soaked her clothes in the sharp lye, and herself chopped the tree-roots for firewood.

‘That’s my affair!’ said she.

‘Have you always from childhood been obliged to work and toil?’

‘You can see that in my hands!’ said she, and showed him two small but strong, hard hands with bitten nails. ‘You have learning and can read.’

At Christmas it began to snow heavily. The cold came on, the wind blew sharply, as if it had vitriol to wash people’s faces with. Mother Sören did not let that disturb her. She drew her cloak around her, and pulled her hood down over her head. It was dark in the house, early in the afternoon. She laid wood and turf on the fire, and set herself down to darn her stockings, there was no one else to do it. Towards evening she talked more to the student than was her custom. She spoke about her husband.

‘He has by accident killed a skipper of Dragör, and for that he must work three years in irons. He is only a common sailor, and so the law must take its course.’

‘The law applies also to people of higher position,’ said Holberg.

‘Do you think so?’ said Mother Sören, and looked into the fire, but then she began again, ‘Have you heard of Kai Lykke, who caused one of his churches to be pulled down, and when the priest thundered from the pulpit about it, he caused the priest to be laid in irons, appointed a court, and adjudged him to have forfeited his head, which was accordingly struck off; that was not an accident, and yet Kai Lykke went free that time!’

‘He was in the right according to the times!’ said Holberg, ‘now we are past that!’

‘You can try to make fools believe that,’ said Mother Sören as she rose and went into the room where the child lay, eased it and laid it down again, and then arranged the student’s bed; he had the leather covering, for he felt the cold more than she did, and yet he had been born in Norway.

On New Year’s morning it was a real bright sunshiny day; the frost had been and still was so strong that the drifted snow lay frozen hard, so that one could walk upon it. The bells in the town rang for church, and the student

Holberg took his woollen cloak about him and would go to the town.

Over the ferry-house the crows and rooks were flying with loud cries, one could scarcely hear the church bells for their noise. Mother Sören stood outside, filling a brass kettle with snow, which she was going to put on the fire to get drinking-water. She looked up to the swarm of birds, and had her own thoughts about it.

The student Holberg went to church ; on the way there and back he passed Sivert the tax-collector's house, by the town gate ; there he was invited in for a glass of warm ale with syrup and ginger. The conversation turned on Mother Sören, but the tax-collector did not know much about her—indeed, few people did. She did not belong to Falster, he said ; she had possessed a little property at one time ; her husband was a common sailor with a violent temper, who had murdered a skipper of Dragör. 'He beats his wife, and yet she takes his part.'

'I could not stand such treatment !' said the tax-collector's wife. 'I am also come of better people ; my father was stocking-weaver to the Court !'

'Consequently you have married a Government official,' said Holberg, and made a bow to her and the tax-collector.

It was Twelfth Night, the evening of the festival of the Three Kings. Mother Sören lighted for Holberg a three-king candle—that is to say, a tallow-candle with three branches, which she herself had dipped.

'A candle for each man !' said Holberg.

'Each man ?' said the woman, and looked sharply at him.

'Each of the wise men from the east !' said Holberg.

'That way !' said she, and was silent for a long time. But on the evening of the Three Kings he learned more about her than he did before.

'You have an affectionate mind to your husband,' said Holberg, 'and yet people say that he treats you badly.'

'That is no one's business but mine !' she answered. 'The blows could have done me good as a child ; now I get them for my sin's sake ! I know what good he has done me,' and she rose up. 'When I lay ill on the open heath, and no one cared to come in contact with me, except

perhaps the crows and the rooks to peck at me, he carried me in his arms and got hard words for the catch he brought on board. I am not used to be ill, and so I recovered. Every one has his own way, Sören has his, and one should not judge a horse by the halter ! With him I have lived more comfortably than with the one they called the most gallant and noble of all the king's subjects. I have been married to the Stadtholder Gyldenlöwe, the half-brother of the king ; later on I took Palle Dyre ! Right or wrong, each has his own way, and I have mine. That was a long story, but now you know it !' And she went out of the room.

It was Marie Grubbe ! so strange had been the rolling ball of her fortune. She did not live to see many more anniversaries of the festival of the Three Kings ; Holberg has recorded that she died in 1716, but he has not recorded, for he did not know it, that when Mother Sören, as she was called, lay a corpse in the ferry-house, a number of big blackbirds flew over the place. They did not scream, as if they knew that silence belonged to a burial. As soon as she was laid in the earth the birds disappeared, but the same evening over at the old manor in Jutland an enormous number of crows and rooks were seen ; they all screamed as loud as they could, as if they had something to announce, perhaps about him who as a little boy took their eggs and young ones, the farmer's son who had to wear a garter of iron, and the noble lady who ended her life as a ferry-woman at Grönsund.

'Brave ! brave !' they screamed.

And the whole family screamed 'Brave ! brave !' when the old manor-house was pulled down. 'They still cry, and there is no more to cry about !' said the clerk, when he told the story. 'The family is extinct, the house pulled down, and where it stood, now stands the grand hen-house with the gilded weathercock and with old Poultry Meg. She is so delighted with her charming dwelling ; if she had not come here, she would have been in the workhouse.'

The pigeons cooed over her, the turkeys gobbled round about her, and the ducks quacked.

'No one knew her !' they said. 'She has no relations. It is an act of grace that she is here. She has neither a drake father nor a hen mother, and no descendants !'

Still she had relations, although she did not know it, nor the clerk either, however much manuscript he had in the table-drawer, but one of the old crows knew about it, and told about it. From its mother and grandmother it had heard about Poultry Meg's mother and her grandmother, whom we also know from the time she was a child and rode over the bridge looking about her proudly, as if the whole world and its birds' nests belonged to her; we saw her out on the heath by the sand-dunes, and last of all in the ferry-house. The grandchild, the last of the race, had come home again where the old house had stood, where the wild birds screamed, but she sat among the tame birds, known by them and known along with them. Poultry Meg had no more to wish for, she was glad to die, and old enough to die.

'Grave! grave!' screamed the crows.

And Poultry Meg got a good grave, which no one knew except the old crow, if he is not dead also.

And now we know the story of the old manor, the old race, and the whole of Poultry Meg's family.

THE THISTLE'S EXPERIENCES

BESIDE the lordly manor-house lay a lovely, well-kept garden with rare trees and flowers; the guests of the house expressed their admiration of it; the people of the district, from town and country, came on Sundays and holidays and begged permission to see the garden, even whole schools came to visit it.

Outside the garden, close to the palings beside the field-path, stood a huge thistle; it was very big and spread from the root in several branches, so that it might be called a thistle-bush. No one looked at it except the old ass which drew the milk-cart. It stretched out its neck to the thistle, and said, 'You are lovely! I could eat you!' but the halter was not long enough for the ass to get near enough to eat it.

There was a great deal of company at the manor-house—some very noble people from the capital, young pretty

girls, and amongst them a young lady who came from a distance; she came from Scotland, was of high birth, rich in lands and gold, a bride worth winning, more than one young gentleman said, and their mothers said the same thing.

The young people amused themselves on the lawn and played croquet; they walked about amongst the flowers, and each of the young girls picked a flower and put it in the button-hole of one of the young gentlemen. But the young Scottish lady looked round for a long time, rejecting one after the other; none of the flowers seemed to please her; then she looked over the paling, outside stood the great thistle-bush with its strong, purple flowers; she saw it, she smiled and begged the son of the house to pick one of them for her.

‘It is the flower of Scotland!’ said she, ‘it blooms in the scutcheon of the country, give it to me!’

And he brought her the most beautiful of the thistles, and pricked his fingers, as if it were the most prickly rose-bush that it grew on.

She fastened the thistle-flower in the button-hole of the young man, and he felt himself highly honoured. Each of the other young men would willingly have given his own beautiful flower to have worn the one given by the Scottish girl’s fair hand. And if the son of the house felt himself honoured, what did not the thistle-bush feel? It seemed as if the dew and the sunshine were going through it.

‘I am something more than I thought!’ it said to itself. ‘I really belong inside the paling and not outside! One is strangely placed in the world! but now I have one of mine over the paling, and even in a button-hole!’

Every bud which came forth and unfolded was told of this event, and not many days went past before the thistle-bush heard, not from people, nor from the twittering of the birds, but from the air itself, which preserves and carries sound, from the most retired walks of the garden and the rooms of the house, where the doors and windows stood open, that the young gentleman who got the thistle-flower from the fair Scottish girl’s hand, had now got her hand and heart as well. They were a handsome pair—it was a good match.

'I have brought that about!' thought the thistle-bush, and thought of the flower it had given for a button-hole. Each flower that opened heard of this occurrence.

'I shall certainly be planted in the garden!' thought the thistle; perhaps put in a pot which pinches: that is the greatest honour of all!

And the thistle thought of this so strongly that it said with full conviction, 'I shall be put in a pot!'

It promised every little thistle-flower which opened that it also should be put in a pot, perhaps in a button-hole—the highest honour that was to be attained; but none of them was put in a pot, to say nothing of a button-hole; they drank in the air and the light, licked the sunshine by day and the dew by night, bloomed, were visited by bees and hornets which searched for the dowry, the honey in the flowers, and they took the honey and left the flower standing. 'The thieving pack!' said the thistle, 'if I could only stab them! But I cannot!'

The flowers hung their heads and faded, but new ones came again.

'You come in good time!' said the thistle, 'every minute I expect to get across the fence.'

A few innocent daisies and narrow-leaved plantains stood and listened with deep admiration, and believed everything that was said.

The old ass of the milk-cart looked along from the wayside to the thistle-bush, but the halter was too short to reach it.

And the thistle thought so long of the Scottish thistle to whose family it thought it belonged, that at last it believed it came from Scotland and that its parents had been put into the national scutcheon. It was a great thought, but great thistles can have great thoughts!

'One is often of such a noble family, that one dare not know it!' said the nettle, which grew close by; it also had an idea that it might turn into nettle-cloth if it were properly handled. And the summer passed and the autumn passed; the leaves fell off the trees, the flowers got strong colours and less scent. The gardener's apprentice sang in the garden, across the fence:

'Up the hill and down the hill,
That is all the story still.'

The young fir-trees in the wood began to long for Christmas, but it was a long time to Christmas.

‘Here I stand still!’ said the thistle. ‘It seems as if no one thought about me, and yet *I* have made the match; they were betrothed, and they held their wedding eight days ago. I won’t take a step, for I cannot.’

Some more weeks went past; the thistle stood with its last single flower, big and full, it had shot up close by the root. The wind blew cold over it, the colours went, the splendour vanished, the calyx of the flower, big as that of an artichoke bloom, looked like a silver sunflower. Then the young couple, now man and wife, came into the garden; they went along by the paling, and the young wife looked across it.

‘There stands the big thistle yet!’ said she; ‘now it has no more flowers!’

‘Yes, there is the ghost of the last one!’ said he, and pointed to the silvery remains of the flower, itself a flower.

‘It is lovely!’ said she, ‘such a one must be carved round about the frame of our picture!’

And the young man had to climb the paling again to break off the calyx of the thistle. It pricked him in the fingers,—he had called it a ‘ghost’. And it came into the garden, into the house, and into the drawing-room; there stood a picture—‘the young couple’. In the bridegroom’s button-hole was painted a thistle. They talked about this and about the thistle-flower they brought, the last thistle-flower now gleaming like silver, a copy of which was to be carved on the frame.

And the breeze carried what was said, away, far away.

‘What one can experience!’ said the thistle-bush. ‘My firstborn was put in a button-hole, my last in a frame! Where shall *I* go?’

And the ass stood by the road-side and looked long at the thistle.

‘Come to me, my kitchen-love! I cannot come to you, the halter is not long enough!’

But the thistle did not answer; it became more and more thoughtful; it thought, and it thought, right up to Christmas-time, and then the thought came into flower:

If one's children have got inside, a mother can be content to stand outside the fence !'

'That is an honourable thought !' said the sunbeam. 'You shall also get a good place !'

'In a pot or in a frame ?' asked the thistle.

'In a story !' said the sunbeam. And here it is !

GOOD LUCK CAN LIE IN A PIN

Now I shall tell a story about good luck. We all know good luck : some see it from year's end to year's end, others only at certain seasons, on a certain day ; there are even people who only see it once in their lives, but see it we all do.

Now I need not tell you, for every one knows it, that God sends the little child and lays it in a mother's lap,—it may be in the rich castle, and in the well-to-do house, but it may also be in the open field where the cold wind blows. Every one does not know, however, but it is true all the same, that God, when He brings the child, brings also a lucky gift for it : but it is not laid openly by its side ; it is laid in some place in the world where one would least expect to find it, and yet it always *is* found : that is the best of it. It may be laid in an apple ; it was so for a learned man who was called Newton : the apple fell, and so he found his good luck. If you do not know the story, then ask some one who knows it to tell it you. I have another story to tell, and that is a story about a pear.

Once upon a time there was a man who was born in poverty, had grown up in poverty, and in poverty he had married. He was a turner by trade and made, especially, umbrella handles and rings ; but he only lived from hand to mouth. '*I never find good luck,*' he said. This is a story that really happened, and one could name the country and the place where the man lived, but that doesn't matter.

The red, sour rowan-berries grew in richest profusion about his house and garden. In the garden there was also a pear-tree, but it did not bear a single pear, and yet the

good luck was laid in that pear-tree, laid in the invisible pears.

One night the wind blew a terrible storm. They told in the newspapers that the big stage-coach was lifted off the road and thrown aside like a rag. It could very well happen then that a great branch was broken off the pear-tree.

The branch was put into the workshop, and the man, as a joke, made a big pear out of it, and then another big one, then a smaller one, and then some very little ones. 'The tree must some time or other have pears,' the man said, and he gave them to the children to play with.

One of the necessities of life in a wet country is an umbrella. The whole house had only one for common use ; if the wind blew too strongly, the umbrella turned inside-out ; it also snapped two or three times, but the man soon put it right again. The most provoking thing, however, was that the button which held it together when it was down, too often jumped off, or the ring which was round it broke in two.

One day the button flew off ; the man searched for it on the floor, and there got hold of one of the smallest of the wooden pears which the children had got to play with. 'The button is not to be found,' said the man, 'but this little thing will serve the same purpose.' So he bored a hole in it, pulled a string through it, and the little pear fitted very well into the broken ring. It was assuredly the very best fastener the umbrella had ever had.

Next year when the man was sending umbrella handles to the town, as he regularly did, he also sent some of the little wooden pears, and begged that they might be tried, and so they came to America. There they very soon noticed that the little pears held much better than any other button, and now they demanded of the merchant that all the umbrellas which were sent after that should be fastened with a little pear.

Now, there was something to do ! Pears in thousands ! Wooden pears on all umbrellas ! The man must set to work. He turned and turned. The whole pear-tree was cut up into little pears ! It brought in pennies, it brought in shillings !

'My good luck was laid in the pear-tree,' said the man.

He now got a big workshop with workmen and boys. He was always in a good humour, and said, 'Good luck can lie in a pin !'

I also, who tell the story, say so. People have a saying, 'Take a white pin in your mouth and you will be invisible,' but it must be the right pin, the one which was given us as a lucky gift by our Lord. I got that, and I also, like the man, can catch chinking gold, gleaming gold, the very best, that kind which shines from children's eyes, the kind that sounds from children's mouths, and from father and mother too. They read the stories, and I stand among them in the middle of the room, but invisible, for I have the white pin in my mouth. If I see that they are delighted with what I tell them, then I also say, 'Good luck can lie in a pin !'

THE CANDLES

THERE was once a big wax-candle which knew its own importance quite well.

'I am born of wax and moulded in a shape,' it said ; 'I give better light and burn longer than other candles ; my place is in a chandelier or on a silver candlestick !'

'That must be a lovely existence !' said the tallow-candle. 'I am only made of tallow, but I comfort myself with the thought that it is always a little better than being a farthing dip : that is only dipped twice, and I am dipped eight times to get my proper thickness. I am content ! it is certainly finer and more fortunate to be born of wax instead of tallow, but one does not settle one's own place in this world. You are placed in the big room in the glass chandelier, I remain in the kitchen, but that is also a good place ; from there the whole house gets its food.'

'But there is something which is more important than food,' said the wax-candle. 'Society ! to see it shine, and to shine oneself ! There is a ball this evening, and soon I and all my family will be fetched.'

Scarcely was the word spoken, when all the wax-candles

were fetched, but the tallow-candle also went with them. The lady herself took it in her dainty hand, and carried it out to the kitchen : a little boy stood there with a basket, which was filled with potatoes ; two or three apples also found their way there. The good lady gave all this to the poor boy.

‘ There is a candle for you as well, my little friend,’ said she. ‘ Your mother sits and works till late in the night ; she can use it ! ’

The little daughter of the house stood close by, and when she heard the words ‘ late in the night ’, she said with great delight, ‘ I also shall stay up till late in the night ! We shall have a ball, and I shall wear my big red sash ! ’ How her face shone ! that was with joy ! No wax-candle can shine like two childish eyes !

‘ That is a blessing to see,’ thought the tallow-candle ; ‘ I shall never forget it, and I shall certainly never see it again.’

And so it was laid in the basket, under the lid, and the boy went away with it.

‘ Where shall I go now ? ’ thought the candle ; ‘ I shall go to poor people, and perhaps not even get a brass candle-stick, while the wax-candle sits in silver and sees all the grand people. How lovely it must be to shine for the grand people ! but it was my lot to be tallow and not wax ! ’

And so the candle came to poor people, a widow with three children, in a little, low room, right opposite the rich house.

‘ God bless the good lady for her gifts,’ said the mother, ‘ what a lovely candle that is ! it can burn till late in the night.’

And then the candle was lighted.

‘ Fut, foi,’ it said, ‘ what a horrid-smelling match that was she lighted me with ! the wax-candle over in the rich house would not have such treatment offered to it.’

There also the candles were lighted : they shone out across the street ; the carriages rolled up with the elegant ball-guests and the music played.

‘ Now they begin across there,’ the tallow-candle noticed, and thought of the beaming face of the rich little girl, more

sparkling than all the wax-lights. 'That sight I shall never see again!'

Then the smallest of the children in the poor house, a little girl, came and took her brother and sister round the neck: she had something very important to tell them, and it must be whispered. 'To-night we shall have—just think!—To-night we shall have hot potatoes!'

And her face shone with happiness: the tallow-candle shone right into it, and it saw a gladness, a happiness as great as over in the rich house, where the little girl said, 'We shall have a ball to-night, and I shall wear my big red sash!'

'It is just as much to get hot potatoes,' thought the candle. 'Here there is just as much joy amongst the children.' And it sneezed at that; that is to say, it sputtered; a tallow-candle can do no more.

The table was laid, and the potatoes eaten. Oh, how good they tasted! it was a perfect feast, and each one got an apple besides, and the smallest child said the little verse:

'Thou good God, I give thanks to Thee
That Thou again hast nourished me.
Amen!'

'Was that not nicely said, Mother?' broke out the little one.

'You must not ask that again,' said the mother; 'you must think only of the good God who has fed you.'

The little ones went to bed, got a kiss and fell asleep at once, and the mother sat and sewed late into the night to get the means of support for them and for herself. And over from the big house the lights shone and the music sounded. The stars shone over all the houses, over the rich and over the poor, equally clear and blessed.

'This has really been a delightful evening!' thought the tallow-candle. 'I wonder if the wax-candles had it any better in the silver candlestick? I would like to know that before I am burned out.'

And it thought of the two happy ones, the one lighted by the wax-candle, and the other by the tallow-candle.

Yes, that is the whole story!

THE MOST INCREDIBLE THING

THE one who could do the most incredible thing should have the king's daughter and the half of his kingdom.

The young men, and even the old ones, strained all their thoughts, sinews, and muscles ; two ate themselves to death, and one drank until he died, to do the most incredible thing according to their own taste, but it was not in this way it was to be done. Little boys in the streets practised spitting on their own backs, they considered that the most incredible thing.

On a certain day an exhibition was to be held of what each had to show as the most incredible. The judges who were chosen were children from three years old to people up in the sixties. There was a whole exhibition of incredible things, but all soon agreed that the most incredible was a huge clock in a case marvellously designed inside and out.

On the stroke of every hour living figures came out, which showed what hour was striking : there were twelve representations in all, with moving figures and with music and conversation.

'That was the most incredible thing,' the people said.

The clock struck one, and Moses stood on the mountain and wrote down on the tables of the law the first commandment, 'There is only one true God.'

The clock struck two, and the garden of Eden appeared, where Adam and Eve met, happy both of them, without having so much as a wardrobe ; they did not need one either.

On the stroke of three, the three kings from the East were shown ; one of them was coal-black, but he could not help that,—the sun had blackened him. They came with incense and treasures.

On the stroke of four came the four seasons : spring with a cuckoo on a budding beech-bough ; summer with a grasshopper on a stalk of ripe corn ; autumn with an empty stork's nest—the birds were flown ; winter with an old crow which could tell stories in the chimney-corner, old memories.

When the clock struck five, the five senses appeared—sight as a spectacle-maker, hearing as a coppersmith, smell sold violets and woodruff, taste was cook, and feeling was an undertaker with crape down to his heels.

The clock struck six ; and there sat a gambler who threw the dice, and the highest side was turned up and showed six.

Then came the seven days of the week, or the seven deadly sins, people were not certain which ; they belonged to each other and were not easily distinguished.

Then came a choir of monks and sang the eight o'clock service.

On the stroke of nine came the nine muses ; one was busy with astronomy ; one with historical archives ; the others belonged to the theatre.

On the stroke of ten, Moses again came forward with the tables of the law, on which stood all God's commandments, and they were ten.

The clock struck again ; then little boys and girls danced and hopped about. They played a game, and sang, 'Two and two and seven, the clock has struck eleven.'

When twelve struck the watchman appeared with his fur cap and halberd : he sang the old watch verse :

' 'Twas at the midnight hour
Our Saviour He was born.'

And while he sang, roses grew and changed into angel-heads borne on rainbow-coloured wings.

It was charming to hear, and lovely to see. The whole was a matchless work of art—the most incredible thing, every one said.

The designer of it was a young man, good-hearted and happy as a child, a true friend, and good to his old parents ; he deserved the Princess and the half of the kingdom.

The day of decision arrived ; the whole of the town had a holiday, and the Princess sat on the throne, which had got new horse-hair, but which was not any more comfortable. The judges round about looked very knowingly at the one who was to win, and he stood glad and confident ; his good fortune was certain, he had made the most incredible thing.

'No, I shall do that now!' shouted just then a long bony fellow. 'I am the man for the most incredible thing,' and he swung a great axe at the work of art.

'Crash, crash!' and there lay the whole of it. Wheels and springs flew in all directions; everything was destroyed.

'That *I* could do!' said the man. 'My work has overcome his and overcome all of you. I have done the most incredible thing.'

'To destroy such a work of art!' said the judges.

'Yes, certainly that is the most incredible thing.'

All the people said the same, and so he was to have the Princess and the half of the kingdom, for a promise is a promise, even if it is of the most incredible kind.

It was announced with trumpet-blast from the ramparts and from all the towers that the marriage should be celebrated. The Princess was not quite pleased about it, but she looked charming and was gorgeously dressed. The church shone with candles; it shows best late in the evening. The noble maidens of the town sang and led the bride forward; the knights sang and accompanied the bridegroom. He strutted as if he could never be broken.

Now the singing stopped and one could have heard a pin fall, but in the midst of the silence the great church door flew open with a crash and clatter, and boom! boom! the whole of the clock-work came marching up the passage and planted itself between the bride and bridegroom. Dead men cannot walk again, we know that very well, but a work of art can walk again; the body was knocked to pieces, but not the spirit; the spirit of the work walked, and that in deadly earnest.

The work of art stood there precisely as if it were whole and untouched. The hours struck, the one after the other, up to twelve, and the figures swarmed forward; first Moses: flames of fire seemed to flash from his forehead; he threw the heavy stone tables down on the feet of the bridegroom and pinned them to the church floor.

'I cannot lift them again,' said Moses, 'you have knocked my arm off! Stand as you stand now!'

Then came Adam and Eve, the wise men from the East, and the four Seasons; each of these told him unpleasant truths, and said 'For shame!'

But he was not in the least ashamed.

All the figures which each stroke of the clock had to exhibit came out of it, and all increased to a terrible size ; there seemed scarcely to be room for the real people ; and when at the stroke of twelve the watchman appeared with his fur cap and halberd, there was a wonderful commotion ; the watchman walked straight up to the bridegroom and struck him on the forehead with his halberd.

‘ Lie there,’ he said, ‘ like for like ! we are avenged and our master as well ! we vanish ! ’

And so the whole work disappeared ; but the candles round about in the church became great bouquets, and the gilded stars on the ceiling of the church sent out long, clear beams, and the organ played of itself. All the people said it was the most incredible thing they had ever experienced.

‘ Will you then summon the right one ! ’ said the Princess, ‘ the one who made the work of art ; let him be my lord and husband.’

And he stood in the church with the whole of the people for his retinue. All were glad and all blessed him ; there was not one who was jealous—and that was the most incredible thing of all.

THE GREAT SEA-SERPENT

THERE was a little sea-fish of good family ; the name I cannot remember, you must get that from the learned. The little fish had eighteen hundred brothers and sisters all of the same age ; they did not know either their father or their mother ; they had just to take care of themselves at once and swim about, but that was a great delight to them.

They had plenty of water to drink—the whole of the sea ; they did not think about food—that would come of itself ; every one would do just as he liked, every one would have his own story—but none of them thought about that either. The sun shone down into the water, and lighted it up round about them ; it was so clear, it was a world

with the most wonderful creatures, and some frightfully big, with enormous mouths which could have swallowed the eighteen hundred brothers and sisters ; but they did not think of that either, for none of them had been swallowed yet.

The little ones swam about together, close up to each other, as herring and mackerel swim ; but as they swam about in the water, doing their very best and thinking of nothing, there sank from above right into the middle of them, with a frightful noise, a long, heavy thing that would not stop coming ; longer and longer it stretched itself, and every one of the little fishes which it struck, was squashed or got a blow which it could never get over. All the little fishes, and the big ones too, right from the surface of the sea down to the bottom, swam away in alarm : the heavy, monstrous thing sank deeper and deeper, and became longer and longer, miles in length—throughout the whole sea.

Fishes and snails, everything that swims, everything which crawls or drifts with the currents, noticed this frightful thing, this immense, unknown sea-eel, which had suddenly come down from above.

What kind of a thing was it ? We know what it was ! It was the great league-long telegraph wire, which was being laid down between Europe and America.

There was a scare and a great commotion among the lawful inhabitants of the sea where the wire was sunk. The flying-fish sprang into the air above the sea, as high as it could ; the gurnard flew the length of a gunshot above the water ; other fish sought the bottom of the sea, and fled so quickly that they arrived there long before the telegraph wire had even been sighted : they frightened both the cod-fish and the flounder, which were swimming about peacefully in the depths of the sea and eating their fellow creatures.

A pair of sea-cucumbers were so scared that they vomited their stomachs out ; but they still lived, for they can do that. Many lobsters and crabs came out of their good harness, and had to leave their legs behind them.

Among all this fright and commotion, the eighteen hundred brothers and sisters got separated from each other,

and never met again, or knew each other ; only about a dozen remained in the same place, and when they had kept quiet for an hour or two, they began to get over their fright and become inquisitive. They looked round about, they looked up, and they looked down, and there in the depths they thought they saw the terrible thing which had frightened them, frightened both big and little. The thing lay along the bottom of the sea as far as they could spy ; it was very thin, but they did not know how thick it could make itself, or how strong it was. It lay very still ; but this, they thought, might be its cunning.

‘Let it lie where it is ! It does not concern us,’ said the most cautious of the little fishes, but the very smallest of them would not give up getting to know what the thing could be. It came down from above ; up above would therefore be the best place to get news about it, and so they swam up to the surface of the sea. The weather was quite calm.

There they met a dolphin, a kind of acrobat, a vagrant of the sea who can turn somersaults on the surface of the water ; it had eyes to see with, and it must have seen and would know all about it. They inquired of it, but it had only thought of itself and its somersaults, had seen nothing, could give no answer, and so was silent and looked haughty.

Thereupon they addressed themselves to a seal who just then dived ; it was more polite, although it ate little fishes ; but to-day it was full. It knew a little more than the dolphin.

‘I have, many a night, lain on a wet stone and looked towards the land, miles away from here. There are clumsy creatures there, who in their language are called men ; they hunt after us, but oftenest we escape from them. I have known how to do that, and so has the sea-eel you now ask about. It has been in their power, been upon the land, no doubt from time immemorial ; from there they have taken it on board a ship to convey it over the sea to another distant land. I saw what trouble they had, but they managed it ; it had become so weak with being on shore. They laid it in coils and twists ; I heard how it rattled and clattered as they laid it ; but it escaped from them, escaped out here. They held it with all their might,

many hands held fast, but it slipped from them and got to the bottom ; it lies there, I think, till later on ! ’

‘ It is rather thin,’ said the little fishes.

‘ They have starved it,’ said the seal, ‘ but it will soon come to itself, and get its old thickness and bigness. I imagine it is the great sea-serpent, which men are so afraid of and talk so much about. I have never seen it before, and never believed in it ; now, I believe that this is it,’ and so the seal dived.

‘ How much he knew ! How much he talked ! ’ said the little fishes, ‘ I have never been so wise before !—If only it is not a lie ! ’

‘ We could swim down and investigate ! ’ said the smallest one ; ‘ on the way we may hear others’ opinions.’

‘ I won’t make a single stroke with my fins, to get to know anything,’ the others said, and turned about.

‘ But I will ! ’ said the smallest, and set off into deep water ; but it was far from the place where ‘ the long sunken thing ’ lay. The little fish looked and searched about on all sides down in the deep.

It had never noticed before how big the world was. The herring went in great shoals, shining like big silver boats ; the mackerel followed, and looked even more magnificent. There came fish of all shapes and with markings of all colours. Jelly-fishes, like half-transparent flowers, allowed themselves to be carried to and fro by the currents. Great plants grew from the bottom of the sea, fathom-high grass and palm-shaped trees, every leaf adorned with shining shells.

At last the little fish spied a long dark stripe and made towards it, but it was neither fish nor cable—it was the railing of a big sunken ship, whose upper and lower decks were broken in two by the pressure of the sea. The little fish swam into the cabin where so many people had perished when the ship sank, and were now all washed away except two : a young woman lay stretched out there with a little child in her arms. The water lifted them and seemed to rock them ; they looked as if they were asleep. The little fish was very frightened ; it did not know that they would never waken again. Water-plants hung like foliage over the railing and over the lovely bodies of mother

and child. It was so still and lonely. The little fish hurried away as quickly as it could, out where the water was clearer and where there were fishes to be seen. It had not gone very far before it met a young whale, so frightfully big.

‘Don’t swallow me,’ said the little fish, ‘I am not even a taste, I am so little, and it is a great pleasure to me to be alive!’

‘What are you doing down here, where your kind does not come?’ asked the whale. And so the little fish told about the long, wonderful eel, or whatever the thing was, which had come down from above and frightened even the most courageous inhabitants of the deep.

‘Ho, ho!’ said the whale, and sucked in so much water that it had to send out a huge spout of it when it came up to the surface to draw breath. ‘Ho, ho!’ it said, ‘so it was that thing which tickled me on the back as I turned myself! I thought it was a ship’s mast which I could use as a clawing-pin! But it was not at this spot. No, the thing lies much farther out. I will investigate it; I have nothing else to do!’

And so it swam forward and the little fish behind, not too near, for there came a tearing current where the big whale shot through the water.

They met a shark and an old saw-fish; they also had heard about the strange sea-eel, so long and so thin; they had not seen it, but they wanted to. Now there came a cat-fish.

‘I will go with you,’ it said; it was going the same way. ‘If the great sea-serpent is no thicker than an anchor-rope, I shall bite it through in one bite,’ and it opened its jaws and showed its six rows of teeth. ‘I can bite a mark in a ship’s anchor, so I can surely bite through that stalk.’

‘There it is,’ said the big whale, ‘I see it!’

He thought he saw better than the others. ‘Look how it lifts itself, look how it sways, bends, and curves itself!’

It was not it, however, but an immensely big conger-eel, several yards long, which approached.

‘I have seen that one before,’ said the saw-fish; ‘it has never made a great noise in the sea, or frightened any big fish.’

And so they spoke to it about the new eel, and asked if it would go with them to discover it.

‘Is that eel longer than me?’ said the conger; ‘then there will be trouble!’

‘That there will be!’ said the others. ‘We are strong enough and won’t stand it,’ and so they hastened forward.

But just then something came in the way, a wonderful monster, bigger than all of them put together. It looked like a floating island, which could not keep itself up.

It was a very old whale. Its head was overgrown with sea-plants; its back was thickly set with creeping things and so many oysters and mussels, that its black skin was quite covered with white spots.

‘Come with us, old one,’ said they; ‘a new fish has come here, which is not to be tolerated.’

‘I would rather lie where I am,’ said the old whale. ‘Leave me alone! Let me lie! Oh, yes, yes, yes. I suffer from a serious illness! I get relief by going up to the surface and getting my back above it! then the big sea-birds come and pick me. It is so nice, if only they don’t put their beaks too far in; they often go right into my blubber. Just look! The whole skeleton of a bird is still sitting on my back, it stuck its claws too far in and could not get loose, when I went to the bottom! Now the little fishes have picked him. See how he looks, and how I look! I have an illness!’

‘It is only imagination!’ said the young whale; ‘I am never ill. No fish is ill!’

‘Excuse me,’ said the old whale, ‘the eel has a skin-disease, the carp is said to have small-pox, and we all suffer from worms.’

‘Rubbish,’ said the shark; he could not be bothered listening to any more, nor the others either, they had other things to think about.

At last they came to the place where the telegraph cable lay. It had a long lair on the bottom of the sea, from Europe to America, right over the sand-banks and sea-mud, rocky bottoms and wildernesses of plants and whole forests of coral. Down there the currents are ever changing, whirlpools turn and eddy, fish swarm in greater numbers than the countless flocks of birds which we see at the time

of their migration. There is a movement, a splashing, a buzzing, and a humming; the humming still echoes a little in the big empty sea-shells, when we hold them to our ears. Now they came to the place.

‘There lies the beast,’ said the big fish, and the little one said the same thing. They saw the cable, whose beginning and end lay beyond the range of their vision.

Sponges, polypi and gorgons swayed about from the bottom of the sea, sank and bent down over it, so that it was seen and hidden alternately. Sea-urchins, snails, and worms crawled about it; gigantic spiders, with a whole crew of creeping things upon them, stalked along the cable. Dark-blue sea-cucumbers (or whatever the creatures are called—they eat with the whole of their body) lay and seemed to snuff at the new animal which laid itself along the bottom of the sea. Flounders and cod-fish turned round in the water so as to listen on all sides. The star-fish, which always bores itself into the mud and only leaves the two long stalks with eyes sticking out, lay and stared to see what the result of all the commotion would be.

The cable lay without moving, but life and thought were in it all the same. The thoughts of men went through it.

‘The thing is cunning!’ said the whale. ‘It is quite capable of hitting me in the stomach, and that is my tender spot!’

‘Let us feel our way!’ said the polypus. ‘I have long arms, I have supple fingers! I have touched it, I will now take hold a little more firmly.’

And it stretched its supple, longest arm down to the cable and round about it.

‘It has no scales,’ said the polypus, ‘it has no skin.’

The sea-eel laid itself down beside the cable, and stretched itself out as far as it could.

‘The thing is longer than I!’ it said, ‘but it is not the length that matters, one must have skin, stomach, and suppleness.’

The whale, the strong young whale, dropped itself down deeper than it had ever been before.

‘Are you fish or plant?’ he asked, ‘or are you only something from above which cannot thrive down here amongst us?’

But the cable answered nothing: that is not its way of doing. Thoughts went through it; the thoughts of men; they ran in a second, many hundreds of miles from land to land.

‘Will you answer or will you be snapped?’ asked the ferocious shark, and all the other big fishes asked the same. ‘Will you answer or be snapped?’

The cable paid no attention, it had its own thoughts; it is full of thoughts.

‘Only let them snap me, and I shall be pulled up and put right again; that has happened to others of my kind in lesser channels.’

And so it answered nothing, it had other things to do; it telegraphed and lay in lawful occupation at the bottom of the sea.

Up above the sun set, as men say; it looked like the reddest fire, and all the clouds in the sky shone like fire, the one more magnificent than the other.

‘Now we will get the red light!’ said the polypus, and so the thing will perhaps be seen better, if that is necessary.’

‘On it, on it!’ shouted the cat-fish, and showed all his teeth.

‘On it, on it,’ said the sword-fish, the whale, and the sea-eel.

They hurled themselves forward, the cat-fish first, but just as they were going to bite the cable, the saw-fish drove his saw with great force into the back of the cat-fish: that was a great mistake, and the cat had no strength to bite.

There was a commotion down there in the mud; big fishes and little fishes, sea-cucumbers and snails ran into each other, ate each other, mashed each other and squashed each other. The cable lay still and did its work as it ought to do. Dark night brooded above the sea, but the millions and millions of living sea animals gave out light. Crabs, not so big as pin-heads, gave out light. It is very wonderful, but so it is. The sea animals gazed at the cable.

‘What is the thing, and what is it not?’

Yes, that was the question.

Then came an old sea-cow. Men call that kind, mermaids or mermen. This one—a she—had a tail, and two short

arms to paddle with, hanging breast, and seaweed and creeping things in her head, and she was very proud of that.

‘Will you have knowledge and information?’ said she; ‘then I am the only one who can give it to you; but I demand for it, free grazing on the bottom of the sea for me and mine. I am a fish like you, and I am also a reptile by practice. I am the wisest in the sea; I know about everything that moves down here, and about all that is above as well. That thing there which you are puzzling about is from above, and whatever is dumped down from up there is dead or becomes dead and powerless; let it alone for what it is; it is only an invention of man!’

‘I believe there is something more than that about it,’ said the little sea-fish.

‘Hold your tongue, mackerel,’ said the big sea-cow.

‘Stickleback,’ said the others, and there were still more insulting things said.

And the sea-cow explained to them that the whole cause of alarm, which did not say a single word itself, was only an invention from the dry land. And it held a little discourse over the tiresomeness of men.

‘They want to get hold of us,’ it said, ‘it is the only thing they live for; they stretch out nets and come with bait on a hook to catch us. That thing there is a kind of big line which they think we will bite, they are so stupid! We are not that! Don’t touch it and it will crumble to pieces, the whole of it. What comes from up there has cracks and flaws, and is fit for nothing!’

‘Fit for nothing,’ said all the fishes, and adopted the sea-cow’s opinion, so as to have an opinion.

The little sea-fish had its own thoughts. ‘The enormous, long, thin serpent is perhaps the most marvellous fish in the sea. I have a feeling like that.’

‘The most marvellous,’ we men say also, and say it with knowledge and assurance.

It is the great sea-serpent talked about long before, in song and story. It is conceived and born, sprung from man’s ingenuity and laid at the bottom of the sea, stretching itself from the eastern to the western lands, bearing messages as quickly as beams of light from the sun to our

earth. It grows, grows in power and extent, grows from year to year, through all the seas, round the earth, under the stormy waters and under the glass-clear water, where the skipper looks down as if he sailed through transparent air, and sees fish swarming like a whole firework show of colours. Farthest down the serpent stretches itself, a world-serpent of blessing, which bites its tail as it encircles the earth. Fish and reptiles run against it with their heads, they do not yet understand the thing from above, the serpent of the knowledge of good and evil, filled with human thoughts and declaring them in all languages, yet silent itself, the most marvellous of the marvels of the deep, the great sea-serpent of our time.

THE GARDENER AND THE FAMILY

FOUR or five miles from the capital stood an old manor, with thick walls, tower, and pointed gables.

Here lived, but only in the summer-time, a noble family : this manor was the best and most beautiful of all the estates they possessed : outside, it looked as if it were newly built, and inside was very comfortable and cosy. The family coat of arms was carved in stone over the door, lovely roses twined themselves over the coat of arms and over the balcony, and a beautiful lawn stretched out before the house : there were red thorns and white thorns, and rare flowers even outside of the hot-house. The family had a very good gardener ; it was a treat to see the flower garden, the fruit and kitchen gardens. Up to this time there was still a part of the original old garden, with some box hedges, cut in the shapes of crowns and pyramids. Behind these stood two old trees : they were nearly always leafless, and one could easily believe that a wind storm or a water-spout had strewn them over with great clumps of manure, but every clump was a bird's nest.

Here from time immemorial a swarm of screaming crows and rooks had built their nests. It was a whole bird town and the birds were the proprietors, the eldest branch of the family, the real masters of the estate. None of the people

down there concerned them, but they tolerated these low walking creatures, although they sometimes shot with guns, so that it gave the birds shivers along the spine, and every bird flew up in a fright and shrieked 'Rak ! Rak !' The gardener talked often to his master about cutting down the old trees, they did not look well, and if they were taken away, one would most probably be free from the screaming birds—they would search for another place then. But the master would neither be free from the trees nor the swarms of birds—it was something which the estate could not lose, it was something from the old times, and one ought not to wipe that out entirely.

'The trees are now the birds' inheritance, let them keep it, my good Larsen !'

The gardener was called Larsen, but that is of no further importance.

'Have you, little Larsen, not enough room for working—the whole of the flower garden, the greenhouses, the fruit and kitchen gardens ?'

These he had, and nursed them, loved them, and cared for them with earnestness and capability, and the family knew that, but they did not hide from him that when visiting they often ate fruit and saw flowers which excelled what they had in their own garden, and that distressed the gardener, for he wished to do his best and he did his best. He was good of heart, and good in his work.

One day the master called him and said in all mildness and dignity that the day before, when with distinguished friends, they had got a variety of apples and pears, so juicy and so well flavoured that all the guests had exclaimed in admiration. The fruit was certainly not native, but it ought to be brought in and made at home here if the climate allowed it. One knew that it had been bought in town at the principal fruiterer's : the gardener should ride in and get to know where these apples and pears came from and order cuttings.

The gardener knew the fruiterer very well, for it was to him that he sold, on the proprietor's account, the surplus of the fruit which was grown in the gardens of the estate.

And the gardener went to town and asked the fruiterer where he got these highly prized apples and pears.

‘They are from your own garden!’ said the fruiterer, and showed him both apples and pears, which he knew again.

How delighted the gardener was! He hurried home and told the family that both the apples and pears were from their own garden.

The family could not believe that. ‘That is impossible, Larsen! Can you get a written assurance from the fruiterer?’

And that he could, and so he brought a written assurance.

‘That is extraordinary!’ said the master.

Every day now great dishes of these lovely apples and pears from their own garden were brought to the table, baskets and barrels of these fruits were sent to friends in the town and country and even to other countries. It was a great joy! It must be said, however, that these had been two remarkable summers for fruit trees; over all the country these had succeeded well.

Time passed; the family one day dined with the court. The day after, the gardener was sent for by his master. They had at dinner got melons from His Majesty’s greenhouse which were so juicy and so full of flavour.

‘You must go to His Majesty’s gardener, good Larsen, and get for us some of the seeds of these precious melons.’

‘But His Majesty’s gardener has got the seeds from us!’ said the gardener, quite delighted.

‘Then the man has known how to bring them to a higher development,’ answered the master; ‘every melon was excellent!’

‘Yes, then I may be proud!’ said the gardener. ‘I may tell your lordship that the court gardener this year has not been successful with his melons, and when he saw how lovely ours were, and tasted them, he ordered three of them to be sent up to the castle.’

‘Larsen! don’t imagine that they were the melons from our garden!’

‘I believe it!’ said the gardener, and he went to the court gardener and got from him a written assurance that the melons at the king’s table had come from the gardens of the manor.

It was really a great surprise for the family, and they did not keep the story a secret; they showed the assurance,

and they sent melon seeds far and wide, just as they had sent cuttings before.

About these they got news that they caught on and set quite excellent fruit, and it was called after the family's estate, so that the name could now be read in English, German, and French. They had never thought of that before.

'If only the gardener won't get too great an opinion of himself!' said the family.

But he took it in another manner: he would only strive now to bring forward his name as one of the best gardeners in the country, and tried every year to bring out something excellent in the gardening line, and did it; but often he heard that the very first fruits he had brought, the apples and pears, were really the best, all later kinds stood far below. The melons had really been very good, but that was quite another thing; the strawberries could also be called excellent, but still no better than those on other estates; and when the radishes one year were a failure, they only talked about the unfortunate radishes and not about any other good thing which he had produced.

It was almost as if the family felt a relief in saying, 'It didn't succeed this year, little Larsen!' They were very glad to be able to say, 'It didn't succeed this year!'

Twice a week the gardener brought fresh flowers for the rooms, always so beautifully arranged; the colours came as it were into a stronger light with the contrasts.

'You have taste, Larsen,' said the family; 'it is a gift which is given to you from our Father, not of yourself!'

One day he came with a big crystal bowl in which lay a water-lily leaf; on it was laid, with its long, thick stalk down in the water, a brilliant blue flower, as big as a sunflower.

'The lotus flower of India,' exclaimed the family. They had never seen such a flower; and it was placed in the sunshine by day and in the evening in a reflex light. Every one who saw it found it both remarkable and rare, yes, even the highest young lady of the land, and she was the princess; she was both wise and good.

The family did itself the honour of presenting it to the princess, and it went with her up to the castle.

Now the master went down into the garden to pluck for himself a flower of the same kind, if such a one could be found, but there was not such a thing. So he called the gardener and asked him where he got the blue lotus from.

‘We have sought in vain,’ said he; ‘we have been in the greenhouse and all round about!’

‘No, it is certainly not there!’ said the gardener; ‘it is only a common flower from the kitchen-garden! but, indeed, isn’t it lovely! it looks like a blue cactus, and yet it is only the flower of the artichoke.’

‘You should have told us that at once!’ said the master. ‘We imagined that it was a strange, rare flower. You have made fools of us before the princess! She saw the flower and thought it beautiful, but did not know it, and she is well up in botany, but that science has nothing to do with vegetables. How could it have entered your head, good Larsen, to send such a flower up to the house? It will make us look ridiculous!’

And the lovely blue flower which was brought from the kitchen-garden was put out of the drawing-room, where it was not at home. The master made an apology to the princess and told her that the flower was only a vegetable which the gardener had taken the idea to present, but for which he had been given a good scolding.

‘That was a sin and a shame!’ said the princess. ‘He has opened our eyes to a beautiful flower we had not noticed, he has shown us beauty where we did not expect to find it! The court gardener shall bring one up to my room every day, so long as the artichoke is in flower!’

And so it was done.

The family then told the gardener that he could again bring them a fresh artichoke flower.

‘It is really beautiful!’ they said, and praised the gardener.

‘Larsen likes that,’ said the family. ‘He is a spoilt child.’

In the autumn there was a terrible storm. It got so violent during the night that many of the big trees in the outskirts of the wood were torn up by the roots, and to the great sorrow of the family, but to the joy of the gardener,

the two big trees with all the birds' nests were blown down. During the storm one heard the screaming of the rooks and the crows ; they beat the windows with their wings, the people in the house said.

'Now you are glad, Larsen,' said the master, 'the storm has blown down the trees and the birds have gone to the woods. There are no more signs of old times ; every sign and every allusion has gone ; it has troubled us !'

The gardener said nothing, but he thought of what he had long intended to do—to use the lovely sunshiny place which formerly he had no control over. It should become the pride of the garden and the delight of the family. The great trees had crushed and broken the old box-hedges with all their cut shapes. He raised here a thicket of plants, home-plants from field and forest.

What no other gardener had thought of planting in the flower-garden, he set here in the kind of soil each should have, and in shade or sunshine as every kind required. He tended it in love, and it grew in magnificence.

Snow-berrybushes from the heath in Jutland, in form and colour like Italian cypress ; the smooth, prickly holly, always green, in winter's cold and summer's sun, stood there lovely to look at. In front grew ferns, many different kinds, some looked as if they were the children of palm trees, and some as if they were the parents of the fine, lovely plant we call Venus's hair. Here stood the slighted burdock, which in its freshness is so beautiful that it can be put in a bouquet. The burdock stood on dry ground, but lower down in the damper soil grew the colt's-foot, also a despised plant, and yet with its fine height and huge leaves so picturesquely beautiful. Fathom high, with flower above flower, like a huge, many-armed candelabrum, the cow's lung-wort lifted itself. Here stood the wood-ruff, the marsh-marigold, and the lily of the valley, the wild calla, and the fine three-leaved wood-sorrel. It was a delight to see.

In front, supported on wire fences, little French pear trees grew in rows ; they got sun and good care, and very soon they bore big, juicy fruit, as in the country they came from.

In place of the two leafless trees, there was a big flag-staff on which waved the Danish flag, and close beside it a pole, on which in summer and autumn hops with their

sweet-smelling clusters twined themselves, but where in the winter, according to old custom, a sheaf of oats was raised that the birds of the air could have their meal at the joyous Christmas time.

‘The good Larsen is growing sentimental in his old age,’ said the family; ‘but he is faithful and devoted to us.’

At New Year time, one of the illustrated papers of the capital had a picture of the old manor; one saw the flag-staff and the sheaf of oats for the birds, and it was spoken of as a beautiful thought that an old custom should be brought into recognition and honour; so distinctive for the old manor.

‘All that Larsen does,’ said the family, ‘they beat the drum for. He is a lucky man! we must almost be proud that we have him!’

But they were not proud of it! They felt that they were the owners, they could give Larsen his dismissal; but they did not do that, they were good people, and there are so many good people of their class, that it is a good thing for every Larsen.

Yes, that is the story of ‘The Gardener and the Family.’ Now you can think it over!

THE CRIPPLE

THERE was an old country-house which belonged to young, wealthy people. They had riches and blessings, they liked to enjoy themselves, but they did good as well, they wished to make everybody as happy as they were themselves.

On Christmas Eve a beautifully decorated Christmas-tree stood in the old hall, where the fire burned in the chimney, and fir branches were hung round the old pictures. Here were assembled the family and their guests, and there was dancing and singing.

Earlier in the evening there had been Christmas gaiety in the servants’ hall. Here also was a great fir-tree with red and white candles, small Danish flags, swans and

fishing-nets, cut out of coloured paper, and filled with 'goodies'. The poor children from the neighbourhood were invited, every one had his mother with him. The mothers did not look much at the Christmas-tree, but at the Christmas table, where there lay linen and woollen cloth—stuff for gowns and stuff for trousers. They and the bigger children looked there, only the very little ones stretched out their hands to the candles, and the tinsel and flags.

The whole party came early in the afternoon and got Christmas porridge and roast goose with red cabbage. Then when the Christmas-tree was seen and the gifts distributed, each got a little glass of punch with apple fritters. Then they went back to their own poor homes and talked of the good living, that is to say good things to eat; and the gifts were once more inspected. There were now Garden Kirsten and Garden Ole. They were married, and had their house and daily bread for weeding and digging in the garden of the big house. Every Christmas festival they got a good share of the gifts; they had five children, and all of them were clothed by the family.

'They are generous people, our master and mistress!' said they, 'but they have the means to be so, and they have pleasure in doing it.'

'Here are good clothes for the four children to wear,' said Ole; 'but why is there nothing for the "cripple"? They used to think about him too, although he was not at the festival.'

It was the eldest of the children they called 'The Cripple', he was called Hans otherwise.

As a little boy, he was the smartest and liveliest child, but he became all at once 'loose in the legs', as they call it, he could neither walk nor stand, and now he had been lying in bed for five years.

'Yes, I got something for him too,' said the mother, 'but it is nothing much, it is only a book to read.'

'He won't get fat on that,' said the father.

But Hans was glad of it. He was a very clever boy who liked to read, but used his time also for working, so far as one who must always lie in bed could be useful. He was very handy, and knitted woollen stockings, and even bed-covers. The lady at the big house had praised and bought

them. It was a story-book Hans had got; in it there was much to read and much to think about.

‘It is not of any kind of use here in the house,’ said his parents, ‘but let him read, it passes the time, he cannot always be knitting stockings!’

The spring came; flowers and green leaves began to sprout—the weeds also, as one may call the nettles, although the psalm speaks so nicely of them:

Though kings in all their power and might
Came forth in splendid row,
They could not make the smallest leaf
Upon a nettle grow.

There was much to do in the garden, not only for the gardener and his apprentice, but also for Kirsten and Ole.

‘It is perfect drudgery,’ said they. ‘We have no sooner raked the paths and made them nice, than they are just trodden down again. There is such a run of visitors up at the house. How much it must cost! But the family are rich people!’

‘Things are badly divided,’ said Ole; ‘the priest says we are all our Father’s children, why the difference then?’

‘It comes from the Fall!’ said Kirsten.

They talked about it again in the evening, where cripple Hans lay with his story-book.

Straitened circumstances, work, and drudgery, had made the parents not only hard in the hands, but also in their opinions and judgements; they could not grasp it, could not explain it, and made themselves more peevish and angry as they talked.

‘Some people get prosperity and happiness, others only poverty! Why should our first parents’ disobedience and curiosity be visited upon us? We would not have behaved ourselves as they did!’

‘Yes, we would!’ said cripple Hans, all at once. ‘It is all here in the book.’

‘What is in the book?’ asked the parents.

And Hans read for them the old story of the wood-cutter and his wife. They also scolded about Adam’s and Eve’s curiosity, which was the cause of their misfortune. The king of the country came past just then. ‘Come home with me,’ said he, ‘then you shall have it as good as I; seven

courses for dinner and a course for show. That is in a closed tureen, and you must not touch it ; for if you do, it is all over with your grandeur.' 'What can there be in the tureen ?' said the wife. 'That does not concern us,' said the man. 'Yes, I am not inquisitive,' said the wife, 'but I would only like to know why we dare not lift the lid ; it is certainly something delicate !' 'If only it is not something mechanical,' said the man, 'such as a pistol, which goes off and wakens the whole house.' 'O my !' said the wife, and did not touch the tureen. But during the night she dreamt that the lid lifted itself, and from the tureen came a smell of the loveliest punch, such as one gets at weddings and funerals. There lay a big silver shilling with the inscription, 'Drink of this punch, and you will become the two richest people in the world, and everybody else will become beggars !'—and the wife wakened at once and told her husband her dream. 'You think too much about the thing !' said he. 'We could lift it gently,' said the wife. 'Gently,' said the man, and the wife then lifted the lid very gently. Then two little active mice sprang out, and ran at once into a mouse-hole. 'Good night,' said the king. Now you can go home and lie in your own bed. Don't scold Adam and Eve any more, you yourselves have been as inquisitive and ungrateful !'

'From where has that story come in the book ?' said Ole. 'It looks as if it concerned us. It is something to think about !'

Next day they went to work again ; they were roasted by the sun, and soaked to the skin with rain ; in them were fretful thoughts, and they ruminated on them.

It was still quite light at home after they had eaten their milk porridge.

'Read the story of the wood-cutter to us again,' said Ole.

'There are so many nice ones in the book,' said Hans, 'so many, you don't know.'

'Yes, but I don't care about them,' said Ole, 'I want to hear the one I know.'

And he and his wife listened to it again.

More than one evening they returned to the story.

'It cannot quite make everything clear to me,' said Ole.

'It is with people as with sweet milk, which sours ; some

become fine cheese, and others the thin, watery whey; some people have luck in everything, sit at the high-table every day, and know neither sorrow nor want.'

Cripple Hans heard that. He was weak in the legs, but clever in the head. He read to them from his story-book, read about 'The man without sorrow or want'. Where was *he* to be found, for found he must be!

The king lay sick and could not be cured, except by being dressed in the shirt which had been worn on the body of a man who could truthfully say that he had never known sorrow or want.

Messages were sent to all the countries in the world, to all castles and estates, to all prosperous and happy men, but when it was properly investigated, every one of them had experienced sorrow and want.

'That I have not!' said the swineherd who sat in the ditch and laughed and sang, 'I am the happiest man!'

'Then give us your shirt,' said the king's messengers. 'You shall be paid for it with the half of the kingdom.'

But he had no shirt, and yet he called himself the happiest man.

'That was a fine fellow,' shouted Ole, and he and his wife laughed as they had not laughed for a year and a day. Then the schoolmaster came past.

'How you are enjoying yourselves!' said he, 'that is something new in this house. Have you won a prize in the lottery?'

'No, we are not of that kind,' said Ole. 'It is Hans who has been reading his story-book to us, about "The man without sorrow or want", and the fellow had no shirt. One's eyes get moist when one hears such things, and that from a printed book. Every one has his load to draw, one is not alone in that. That is always a comfort.'

'Where did you get that book?' asked the schoolmaster.

'Our Hans got it more than a year ago at Christmas-time. The master and mistress gave it to him. They know that he likes reading so much, and he is a cripple. We would rather have seen him get two linen shirts at the time. But the book is wonderful, it can almost answer one's thoughts.'

The schoolmaster took the book and opened it.

‘Let us have the same story again!’ said Ole, ‘I have not quite taken it in yet. Then he must also read the other about the wood-cutter!’

These two stories were enough for Ole. They were like two sunbeams coming into the poor room, into the stunted thought which made him so cross and ill-natured. Hans had read the whole book, read it many times. The stories carried him out into the world, there, where he could not go, because his legs would not carry him.

The schoolmaster sat by his bed: they talked together, and it was a pleasure for both of them. From that day the schoolmaster came oftener to Hans, when the parents were at work. It was a treat for the boy, every time he came. How he listened to what the old man told him, about the size of the world and its many countries, and that the sun was almost half a million times bigger than the earth, and so far away that a cannon-ball in its course would take a whole twenty-five years to come from the sun to the earth, whilst the beams of light could come in eight minutes.

Every industrious schoolboy knew all that, but for Hans it was all new, and still more wonderful than what was in the story-book.

The schoolmaster dined with the squire’s family two or three times a year, and he told how much importance the story-book had in the poor house, where two stories in it alone had been the means of spiritual awakening and blessing. The weakly, clever little boy had with his reading brought reflection and joy into the house.

When the schoolmaster went away, the lady pressed two or three silver dollars into his hand for the little Hans.

‘Father and mother must have them!’ said Hans, when the schoolmaster brought the money.

And Ole and Kirsten said, ‘Cripple Hans after all is a profit and a blessing.’

Two or three days after, when the parents were at work at the big house, the squire’s carriage stopped outside. It was the kind-hearted lady who came, glad that her Christmas present had been such a comfort and pleasure for the boy and his parents. She brought with her fine bread, fruit, and a bottle of fruit syrup, but what was still more delightful she brought him, in a gilt cage, a little blackbird, which

could whistle quite charmingly. The cage with the bird was set up on the old clothes-chest, a little bit away from the boy's bed ; he could see the bird and hear it ; even the people out in the road could hear its song.

Ole and Kirsten came home after the lady had driven away ; they noticed how glad Hans was, but thought there would only be trouble with the present he had got.

' Rich people don't have much foresight ! ' said they. ' Shall we now have that to look after also ? Cripple Hans cannot do it. The end will be that the cat will take it ! '

Eight days passed, and still another eight days : the cat had in that time been often in the room without frightening the bird, to say nothing of hurting it. Then a great event happened. It was afternoon. The parents and the other children were at work, Hans was quite alone ; he had the story-book in his hand, and read about the fisherwoman who got everything she wished for ; she wished to be a king, and that she became ; she wished to be an emperor, and that she became ; but when she wished to become the good God, then she sat once more in the muddy ditch she had come from.

The story had nothing to do with the bird or the cat, but it was just the story he was reading when the incident happened : he always remembered that afterwards.

The cage stood on the chest, the cat stood on the floor and stared at the bird with his greeny-gold eyes. There was something in the cat's face which seemed to say, ' How lovely you are ! How I should like to eat you ! '

Hans could understand that ; he read it in the cat's face.

' Be off, cat ! ' he shouted, ' will you go out of the room ? ' It seemed as if it were just about to spring. Hans could not get at him, and he had nothing else to throw at him but his dearest treasure, the story-book. He threw that, but the binding was loose, and it flew to one side, and the book itself with all its leaves flew to the other. The cat went with slow steps a little back into the room, and looked at Hans as much as to say,

' Don't mix yourself up in this affair, little Hans ! I can walk, and I can spring, and you can do neither.'

Hans kept his eye on the cat and was greatly distressed ; the bird was also anxious. There was no one there to call ;

it seemed as if the cat knew it : it prepared itself again to spring. Hans shook the bed-cover at him ; his hands he *could* use ; but the cat paid no attention to the bed-cover ; and when it was also thrown at him without avail, he sprang upon the chair and into the window-sill, where he was nearer to the bird. Hans could feel his own warm blood in himself, but he did not think of that, he thought only about the cat and the bird ; the boy could not help himself out of bed, could not stand on his legs, still less walk. It seemed as if his heart turned inside him when he saw the cat spring from the window, right on to the chest and push the cage so that it was upset. The bird fluttered wildly about inside.

Hans gave a scream ; something gave a tug inside him, and without thinking about it, he jumped out of bed, flew across to the chest, tore the cat down, and got hold of the cage, where the bird was in a great fright. He held the cage in his hand and ran with it out of the door and out on to the road.

Then the tears streamed out of his eyes ; he shouted with joy, ' I can walk ! I can walk ! '

He had recovered his activity again ; such things can happen, and it had happened to him.

The schoolmaster lived close by ; Hans ran in to him with his bare feet, with only his shirt and jacket on, and with the bird in the cage.

' I can walk ! ' he shouted. ' My God ! ' and he sobbed and wept with joy.

And there was joy in the house of Ole and Kirsten. ' A more joyful day we could not see,' said both of them. Hans was called up to the big house ; he had not gone that way for many years ; it seemed as if the trees and the nut-bushes, which he knew so well, nodded to him and said, ' Good day, Hans, welcome here ! ' The sun shone on his face as well as in his heart. The master and mistress let him sit with them, and looked as glad as if he had belonged to their own family.

Gladdest of all was the lady, who had given him the story-book, given him the singing-bird, which was now as a matter of fact dead, dead of fright, but it had been the means of restoring him to health, and the book had brought the awakening of the parents : he had the book still, and

he would keep it and read it if he were ever so old. Now he could be a benefit to those at home. He would learn a trade, by preference a bookbinder, 'because,' said he, 'I can get all the new books to read!'

In the afternoon the lady called both parents up to her. She and her husband had talked together about Hans; he was a wise and clever boy: had pleasure in reading, and ability.

That evening the parents came home joyfully from the farm, Kirsten in particular, but the week after she wept, for then little Hans went away: he was dressed in good clothes; he was a good boy; but now he must go away across the salt water, far away to school, and many years would pass before they would see him again.

He did not get the story-book with him, the parents kept that for remembrance. And the father often read in it, but nothing except the two stories, for he knew them.

And they got letters from Hans, each one gladder than the last. He was with fine people, in good circumstances, and it was most delightful to go to school; there was so much to learn and to know; he only wanted to remain there a hundred years and then be a schoolmaster.

'If we should live to see it!' said the parents, and pressed each other's hands, as if at communion.

'To think of what has happened to Hans!' said Ole. 'Our Father thinks also of the poor man's child! And that it should happen just with the cripple! Is it not as if Hans were to read it for us out of the story-book?'

A PICTURE-BOOK WITHOUT PICTURES

INTRODUCTION

It is a strange thing, that when I feel most fervently and most deeply, my hands and my tongue seem alike tied, so that I cannot rightly describe or accurately portray the thoughts that are rising within me; and yet I am a painter: my eye tells me as much as that, and all my friends who have seen my sketches and fancies say the same.

I am a poor lad, and live in one of the narrowest of lanes; but I do not want for light, as my room is high up in

the house, with an extensive prospect over the neighbouring roofs. During the first few days I went to live in the town, I felt low-spirited and solitary enough. Instead of the forest and the green hills, I had here only the grey chimneys to look out upon. And I had not then a single friend ; not one familiar face greeted me.

So one evening I stood at the window, in a desponding mood ; and presently I opened the casement and looked out. Oh, how my heart leaped up with joy ! Here was a well-known face at last—a round, friendly countenance, the face of a good friend I had known at home. In fact, it was the MOON that looked in upon me. He was quite unchanged, the dear old Moon, and had the same face exactly that he used to show when he peered down upon me through the willow trees on the moor. I kissed my hand to him over and over again, as he shone straight into my little room ; and he, for his part, promised me that every evening, when he came abroad, he would look in upon me for a few moments. This promise he has faithfully kept. It is a pity that he can only stay such a short time when he comes. Whenever he appears, he tells me of one thing or another that he has seen on the previous night or on that same evening.

‘Just paint the scenes I describe to you!’—this is what he said to me—‘and you will have a very pretty picture-book.’

I have followed his injunction for many evenings. I could make up a new ‘Thousand and One Nights’, in my own way, out of these pictures, but the number might be too great, after all. The pictures I have here given have not been selected, but follow each other, just as they were described to me. Some great gifted painter, or some poet or musician, may make something more of them if he likes ; what I have given here are only hasty sketches, hurriedly put upon the paper, with some of my own thoughts interspersed ; for the Moon did not come to me every evening—a cloud sometimes hid his face from me.

FIRST EVENING

‘LAST night !—I am quoting the Moon’s own words—‘last night I was gliding through the cloudless Indian sky. My face was mirrored in the waters of the Ganges, and my

beams strove to pierce through the thick intertwining boughs of the plane trees, arching beneath me like the tortoise's shell. Forth from the thicket tripped a Hindoo maid, light as a gazelle, beautiful as Eve. There was something so airy and ethereal, and yet so full and firm in this daughter of Hindostan : I could read her thoughts through her delicate skin. The thorny creeping plants tore her sandals, but for all that she came rapidly forward. The deer which came from the river where it had quenched its thirst, sprang by with a startled bound, for in her hand the maiden bore a lighted lamp. I could see the blood in her delicate finger-tips, as she spread them for a screen before the flame. She came down to the stream, and set the lamp upon the water, and let it float away. The flame flickered to and fro, and seemed ready to expire ; but still the lamp burned on, and the girl's black sparkling eyes, half-veiled behind their long silken lashes, followed it with a gaze of earnest intensity. She well knew that if the lamp continued to burn so long as she could keep it in sight, her betrothed was still alive ; but if the lamp was suddenly extinguished, he was dead. And the lamp burned and quivered, and her heart burned and trembled ; she fell on her knees, and prayed. Near her in the grass lay a speckled snake, but she heeded it not—she thought only of Brahma and of her betrothed. “ He lives ! ” she shouted joyfully, “ he lives ! ” And from the mountains the echo came back upon her, “ He lives ! ”

SECOND EVENING

‘ YESTERDAY,’ said the Moon to me, ‘ I looked down upon a small courtyard surrounded on all sides by houses. In the courtyard sat a hen with eleven chickens ; and a pretty little girl was running and jumping around them. The hen was frightened, and screamed, and spread out her wings over the little brood. Then the girl's father came out and scolded her ; and I glided away and thought no more of the matter.

‘ But this evening, only a few minutes ago, I looked down into the same courtyard. Everything was quiet. But presently the little girl came forth again, crept quietly to

the hen-house, pushed back the bolt, and slipped into the apartment of the hens and chickens. They cried out loudly, and came fluttering down from their perches, and ran about in dismay, and the little girl ran after them. I saw it quite plainly, for I looked through a hole in the hen-house wall. I was angry with the wilful child, and felt glad when her father came out and scolded her more violently than yesterday, holding her roughly by the arm : she held down her head, and her blue eyes were full of large tears. "What are you about here ?" he asked. She wept and said, "I wanted to kiss the hen and beg her pardon for frightening her yesterday ; but I was afraid to tell you."

'And the father kissed the innocent child's forehead, and I kissed her on the mouth and eyes.'

THIRD EVENING

'IN the narrow street round the corner yonder—it is so narrow that my beams can only glide for a minute along the walls of the house, but in that minute I see enough to learn what the world is made of—in that narrow street I saw a woman. Sixteen years ago that woman was a child, playing in the garden of the old parsonage in the country. The hedges of rose bushes were old, and the flowers were faded. They straggled wild over the paths, and the ragged branches grew up among the boughs of the apple-trees ; here and there were a few roses still in bloom—not so fair as the queen of flowers generally appears, but still they had colour and scent too. The clergyman's little daughter appeared to me a far lovelier rose, as she sat on her stool under the straggling hedge, hugging and caressing her doll with the battered pasteboard cheeks.

'Ten years afterwards I saw her again. I beheld her in a splendid ball-room : she was the beautiful bride of a rich merchant. I rejoiced at her happiness, and sought her on calm quiet evenings—ah, nobody thinks of my clear eye and my sure glance ! Alas ! my rose ran wild, like the rose bushes in the garden of the parsonage. There are tragedies in everyday life, and to-night I saw the last act of one.

'She was lying in bed in a house in that narrow street ;

she was sick unto death, and the cruel landlord came up, and tore away the thin coverlet, her only protection against the cold. "Get up!" said he; "your face is enough to frighten one. Get up and dress yourself. Give me money, or I'll turn you out into the street! Quick—get up!" She answered, "Alas! death is gnawing at my heart. Let me rest." But he forced her to get up and bathe her face, and put a wreath of roses in her hair; and he placed her in a chair at the window, with a candle burning beside her, and went away.

'I looked at her, and she was sitting motionless, with her hands in her lap. The wind caught the open window and shut it with a crash, so that a pane came clattering down in fragments; but still she never moved. The curtain fluttered like a flame about her; she was dead. There at the window sat the dead woman, preaching a sermon against *sin*—my poor faded rose out of the parsonage garden!'

FOURTH EVENING

'Last evening I saw a German play acted,' said the Moon. 'It was in a little town. A stable had been turned into a theatre; that is to say, the stalls had been left standing, and had been turned into private boxes, and all the timber-work had been covered with coloured paper. A little iron chandelier hung beneath the ceiling, and that it might be made to disappear into the ceiling, as it does in great theatres, when the *ting-ting* of the prompter's bell is heard, a great inverted tub had been placed just above it.

'*Ting-ting!*' and the little iron chandelier suddenly rose at least half a yard and disappeared in the tub; and that was the sign that the play was going to begin. A young nobleman and his lady, who happened to be passing through the little town, were present at the performance, and consequently the house was crowded. But under the chandelier was a vacant space like a little crater: not a single soul sat there, for the tallow was dropping, drip, drip! I saw everything, for it was so warm in there that every loophole had been opened. The male and female servants stood outside, peeping through the chinks, although

the policeman was inside, threatening them with a stick. Close by the orchestra could be seen the noble young couple in two old arm-chairs, which were usually occupied by his worship the mayor and his lady ; but these latter were to-day obliged to content themselves with wooden forms, just as if they had been ordinary citizens ; and the lady observed quietly to herself, " One sees, now, that there is rank above rank ; " and this incident gave an air of extra festivity to the whole proceedings. The chandelier gave little leaps, the crowd got their knuckles rapped, and I, the Moon, was present at the performance from beginning to end.'

FIFTH EVENING

' YESTERDAY,' began the Moon, ' I looked down upon the turmoil of Paris. My eye penetrated into an apartment of the Louvre. An old grandmother, poorly clad—she belonged to the working class—was following one of the under-servants into the great empty throne-room, for this was the apartment she wanted to see—that she was resolved to see ; it had cost her many a little sacrifice and many a coaxing word to penetrate thus far. She folded her thin hands, and looked round with an air of reverence, as if she had been in a church.

" Here it was ! " she said, " here ! " And she approached the throne, from which hung the rich velvet fringed with gold lace. " There," she exclaimed, " there ! " and she knelt and kissed the purple carpet. I think she was actually weeping.

" But it was not *this very* velvet ! " observed the footman, and a smile played about his mouth.

" True, but it was this very place," replied the woman, " and it must have looked just like this."

" It looked so, and yet it did not," observed the man : " the windows were beaten in, and the doors were off their hinges, and there was blood upon the floor."

" But for all that you can say, my grandson died upon the throne of France." " Died ! " mournfully repeated the old woman.

' I do not think another word was spoken, and they soon quitted the hall. The evening twilight faded, and my light

shone doubly vivid upon the rich velvet that covered the throne of France.

‘Now, who do you think this poor woman was? Listen, I will tell you a story.

‘It happened in the Revolution of July, on the evening of the most brilliantly victorious day, when every house was a fortress, every window a breastwork. The people stormed the Tuileries. Even women and children were to be found among the combatants. They penetrated into the apartments and halls of the palace. A poor half-grown boy in a ragged blouse fought among the older insurgents. Mortally wounded with several bayonet thrusts, he sank down. This happened in the throne-room. They laid the bleeding youth upon the throne of France, wrapped the velvet round his wounds, and his blood streamed forth upon the imperial purple. There was a picture! the splendid hall, the fighting groups! A torn flag lay upon the ground, the tricolour was waving above the bayonets, and on the throne lay the poor lad with the pale glorified countenance, his eyes turned towards the sky, his limbs writhing in the death agony, his breast bare, and his poor tattered clothing half-hidden by the rich velvet embroidered with silver lilies. At the boy’s cradle a prophecy had been spoken: “He will die on the throne of France!” The mother’s heart had fondly imagined a second Napoleon.

‘My beams have kissed the wreath of *immortelles* on his grave, and this night they kissed the forehead of the old grandame, while in a dream the picture floated before her which thou mayest draw—the poor boy on the throne of France.’

SIXTH EVENING

‘I’VE been in Upsala,’ said the Moon: ‘I looked down upon the great plain covered with coarse grass, and upon the barren fields. I mirrored my face in the Fyris river, while the steamboat scared the fish into the rushes. Beneath me floated the clouds, throwing long shadows on the so-called graves of Odin, Thor, and Frey. In the scanty turf that covers the grave-mounds, names have been cut. There is no monument here, no memorial on which the traveller can

have his name carved, no rocky wall on whose surface he can get it painted ; so visitors have the turf cut away for that purpose. The naked earth peers through in the form of great letters and names ; these form a network over the whole hill. Here is an immortality, which lasts till the fresh turf grows !

‘ Up on the hill stood a man, a poet. He emptied the mead horn with the broad silver rim, and murmured a name. He begged the winds not to betray him, but I heard the name. I knew it. A count’s coronet sparkles above it, and therefore he did not speak it out. I smiled, for I knew that a poet’s crown adorned his own name. The nobility of Eleanora d’Este is attached to the name of Tasso. And I also know where the Rose of Beauty blooms ! ’

Thus spake the Moon, and a cloud came between us. May no cloud separate the poet from the rose !

SEVENTH EVENING

‘ ALONG the margin of the shore stretches a forest of firs and beeches, and fresh and fragrant is this wood ; hundreds of nightingales visit it every spring. Close beside it is the sea, the ever-changing sea, and between the two is placed the broad high road. One carriage after another rolls over it ; but I did not follow them, for my eye loves best to rest upon one point. A grave-mound stands there, and the sloe and blackberry grow luxuriantly among the stones. Here is true poetry in nature.

‘ And how do you think men appreciate this poetry ? I will tell you what I heard there last evening and during the night.

‘ First, two rich landed proprietors came driving by. “ Those are glorious trees ! ” said the first. “ Certainly there are ten loads of firewood in each,” observed the other : “ it will be a hard winter, and last year we got fourteen dollars a load ”—and they were gone. “ The road here is wretched,” observed another man who drove past. “ That’s the fault of those horrible trees,” replied his neighbour ; “ there is no free current of air ; the wind can only come

from the sea"—and they were gone. The stage coach went rattling past. All the passengers were asleep at this beautiful spot. The postilion blew his horn, but he only thought, "I can play capitably. It sounds well here. I wonder if those in there like it?"—and the stage coach vanished. Then two young fellows came gallopping up on horseback. There's youth and spirit in the blood here! thought I; and, indeed, they looked with a smile at the moss-grown hill and thick forest. "I should not dislike a walk here with the miller's Christine," said one—and they flew past.

'The flowers scented the air; every breath of air was hushed: it seemed as if the sea were a part of the sky that stretched above the deep valley. A carriage rolled by. Six people were sitting in it. Four of them were asleep; the fifth was thinking of his new summer coat, which would suit him admirably; the sixth turned to the coachman and asked him if there were anything remarkable connected with yonder heap of stones. "No," replied the coachman, "it's only a heap of stones; but the trees are remarkable." "How so?" "Why, I'll tell you how they are very remarkable. You see, in winter, when the snow lies very deep, and has hidden the whole road so that nothing is to be seen, those trees serve me for a landmark. I steer by them, so as not to drive into the sea; and you see that is why the trees are remarkable."

'Now came a painter. He spoke not a word, but his eyes sparkled. He began to whistle. At this the nightingales sang louder than ever. "Hold your tongues!" he cried, testily; and he made accurate notes of all the colours and transitions—blue, and lilac, and dark brown. "That will make a beautiful picture," he said. He took it in just as a mirror takes in a view; and as he worked he whistled a march of Rossini's. And last of all came a poor girl. She laid aside the burden she carried and sat down to rest by the grave-mound. Her pale handsome face was bent in a listening attitude towards the forest. Her eyes brightened, she gazed earnestly at the sea and the sky, her hands were folded, and I think she prayed, "Our Father." She herself could not understand the feeling that swept through her, but I know that this minute and the beautiful

natural scene will live within her memory for years, far more vividly and more truly than the painter could portray it with his colours on paper. My rays followed her till the morning dawn kissed her brow.'

EIGHTH EVENING

HEAVY clouds obscured the sky, and the Moon did not make his appearance at all. I stood in my little room, more lonely than ever, and looked up at the sky where he ought to have shown himself. My thoughts flew far away, up to my great friend, who every evening told me such pretty tales, and showed me pictures. Yes, he has had an experience indeed. He glided over the waters of the Deluge, and smiled on Noah's ark just as he lately glanced down upon me, and brought comfort and promise of a new world that was to spring forth from the old. When the Children of Israel sat weeping by the waters of Babylon, he glanced mournfully between the willows where hung the silent harps. When Romeo climbed the balcony, and the promise of true love fluttered like a cherub toward heaven, the round Moon hung, half-hidden among the dark cypresses, in the lucid air. He saw the captive giant at St. Helena, looking from the lonely rock across the wide ocean, while great thoughts swept through his soul. Ah! what tales the Moon can tell. Human life is like a story to him. To-night I shall not see thee again, old friend. To-night I can draw no picture of the memories of thy visit. And, as I looked dreamily towards the clouds, the sky became bright. There was a glancing light, and a beam from the Moon fell upon me. It vanished again, and dark clouds flew past; but still it was a greeting, a friendly good-night offered to me by the Moon.

NINTH EVENING

THE air was clear again. Several evenings had passed, and the Moon was in the first quarter. Again he gave me an outline for a sketch. Listen to what he told me.

'I have followed the polar bird and the swimming whale to the eastern coast of Greenland. Gaunt ice-covered rocks and dark clouds hung over a valley, where dwarf

willows and bilberry bushes stood clothed in green. The blooming lychnis exhaled sweet odours. My light was faint, my face pale as the water-lily that, torn from its stem, has been drifting for weeks with the tide. The crown-shaped Northern Lights burned in the sky. Its ring was broad, and from its circumference the rays shot like whirling shafts of fire across the whole sky, changing from green to red. The inhabitants of that icy region were assembling for dance and festivity ; but accustomed to this glorious spectacle, they scarcely deigned to glance at it. "Let us leave the souls of the dead to their ball-play with the heads of the walruses," they thought in their superstition, and they turned their whole attention to the song and dance. In the midst of the circle, and divested of his furry cloak, stood a Greenlander, with his small drum, and he played and sang a song about catching the seal, and the chorus around chimed in with "*Eia, Eia, Ah.*" And in their white furs they danced about in the circle, till you might fancy it was a polar bears' ball.

'And now a Court of Judgement was opened. Those Greenlanders who had quarrelled stepped forward, and the offended person chanted forth the faults of his adversary in an extempore song, turning them sharply into ridicule, to the sound of the drum and the measure of the dance. The defendant replied with satire as keen, while the audience laughed and gave their verdict.

The rocks heaved, the glaciers melted, and great masses of ice and snow came crashing down, shivering to fragments as they fell : it was a glorious Greenland summer night. A hundred paces away, under the open tent of hides, lay a sick man. Life still flowed through his warm blood, but still he was to die ; he himself felt it, and all who stood round him knew it also ; therefore his wife was already sewing round him the shroud of furs, that she might not afterwards be obliged to touch the dead body. And she asked, "Wilt thou be buried on the rock, in the firm snow ? I will deck the spot with thy *kayak*, and thy arrows, and the *angedokk* shall dance over it. Or wouldst thou rather be buried in the sea ?" "In the sea," he whispered, and nodded with a mournful smile. "Yes, it is a pleasant summer tent, the sea," observed the wife. "Thousands of

seals sport there, the walrus shall lie at thy feet, and the hunt will be safe and merry!" And the yelling children tore the outspread hide from the window-hole, that the dead man might be carried to the ocean, the billowy ocean, that had given him food in life, and that now, in death, was to afford him a place of rest. For his monument, he had the floating, ever-changing icebergs, whereon the seal sleeps, while the storm bird flies round their summits.'

TENTH EVENING

'I KNEW an old maid,' said the Moon. 'Every winter she wore a wrapper of yellow satin, and it always remained new, and was the only fashion she followed. In summer she always wore the same straw hat, and I verily believe the very same grey-blue dress.'

'She never went out, except across the street to an old female friend; and in later years she did not even take this walk, for the old friend was dead. In her solitude my old maid was always busy at the window, which was adorned in summer with pretty flowers, and in winter with cress, grown upon felt. During the last months I saw her no more at the window, but she was still alive. I knew that, for I had not yet seen her begin the "long journey", of which she often spoke with her friend. "Yes, yes," she was in the habit of saying, "when I come to die, I shall take a longer journey than I have made my whole life long. Our family vault is six miles from here. I shall be carried there, and shall sleep there among my family and relatives." Last night a hearse stopped at the house. A coffin was carried out, and then I knew that she was dead. They placed straw round the coffin, and the hearse drove away. There slept the quiet old lady, who had not gone out of her house once for the last year. The hearse rolled out through the town gate as briskly as if it were going for a pleasant excursion. On the high road the pace was quicker yet. The coachman looked nervously round every now and then—I fancy he half expected to see her sitting on the coffin, in her yellow satin wrapper. And because he was startled, he foolishly lashed his horses, while he held the reins so tightly that the poor beasts were in a foam! they were

young and fiery. A hare jumped across the road and startled them, and they fairly ran away. The sober old maid, who had for years and years moved quietly round and round in a dull circle, was now, in death, rattled over stock and stone on the public highway. The coffin in its covering of straw tumbled out of the hearse, and was left on the high road, while horses, coachman, and hearse flew off in wild career. The lark rose up carolling from the field, twittering her morning lay over the coffin, and presently perched upon it, picking with her beak at the straw covering, as though she would tear it up. The lark rose up again, singing gaily, and I withdrew behind the red morning clouds.'

ELEVENTH EVENING

'It was a wedding festival,' said the Moon. 'Songs were sung, toasts were drunk, everything was rich and grand. The guests departed; it was past midnight. The mothers kissed the bride and bridegroom, and I saw these two alone by themselves, though the curtains were drawn almost quite close. The lamp lit up the cosy chamber. "I am so glad they are all gone now," he said, and kissed her hands and lips, while she smiled and wept, leaning on his breast as the lotus flower rests on the rushing waters, and they spoke soft and happy words. "Sleep sweetly," he said, and she drew the window curtains to one side. "How beautifully the moon shines," she said; "look how still and clear it is." Then she put out the lamp, and there was darkness in the room, but my rays beamed even as his eyes did. Womanliness, kiss thou the poet's harp, when he sings of life's mysteries.'

TWELFTH EVENING

'I WILL give you a picture of Pompeii,' said the Moon. 'I was in the suburb in the Street of Tombs, as they call it, where the fair monuments stand, in the spot where, ages ago, the merry youths, their temples bound with rosy wreaths, danced with the fair sisters of Laïs. Now, the stillness of death reigned around. German mercenaries, in the Neapolitan service, kept guard, played cards and

dice ; and a troop of strangers from beyond the mountains came into the town, accompanied by a sentry. They wanted to see the city that had risen from the grave illumined by my beams ; and I showed them the wheel-ruts in the streets paved with broad lava slabs ; I showed them the names on the doors, and the signs that hung there yet : they saw in the little courtyard the basins of the fountains, ornamented with shells ; but no jet of water gushed upwards, no songs sounded forth from the richly-painted chambers, where the bronze dog kept the door.

‘ It was the City of the Dead ; only Vesuvius thundered forth his everlasting hymn, each separate verse of which is called by men an eruption. We went to the temple of Venus, built of snow-white marble, with its high altar in front of the broad steps, and the weeping-willows sprouting freshly forth among the pillars. The air was transparent and blue, and black Vesuvius formed the background, with fire ever shooting forth from it, like the stem of the pine tree. Above it stretched the smoky cloud in the silence of the night, like the crown of the pine, but in a blood-red illumination. Among the company was a lady singer, a real and great singer. I have witnessed the homage paid to her in the greatest cities of Europe. When they came to the tragic theatre, they all sat down on the amphitheatre steps, and thus a small part of the house was occupied by an audience, as it had been many centuries ago. The stage still stood unchanged, and its walled side-scenes, and the two arches in the background, through which the beholders saw the same scene that had been exhibited in the old times—a scene painted by Nature herself, namely, the mountains between Sorrento and Amalfi. The singer gaily mounted the ancient stage, and sang. The place inspired her, and she reminded me of a wild Arab horse, that rushes headlong on with snorting nostrils and flying mane—her song was so light and yet so firm. Anon I thought of the mourning mother beneath the cross at Golgotha, so deep was the expression of pain. And, just as it had done thousands of years ago, the sound of applause and delight now filled the theatre. “ Happy, gifted creature ! ” all the hearers exclaimed. Five minutes more, and the stage was empty, the company had vanished, and not a sound more was

heard—all were gone. But the ruins stood unchanged, as they will stand when centuries shall have gone by, and when none shall know of the momentary applause and of the triumph of the fair songstress ; when all will be forgotten and gone, and even for me this hour will be but a dream of the past.

THIRTEENTH EVENING

‘I LOOKED through the windows of an editor’s house,’ said the Moon. ‘It was somewhere in Germany. I saw handsome furniture, many books, and a chaos of newspapers. Several young men were present : the editor himself stood at his desk, and two little books, both by young authors, were to be noticed. “This one has been sent to me,” said he. “I have not read it yet, but it is nicely got up ; what think *you* of the contents ?” “Oh,” said the person addressed—he was a poet himself—“it is good enough ; a little drawn out ; but, you see, the author is still young. The verses might be better, to be sure ; the thoughts are sound, though there is certainly a good deal of commonplace among them. But what will you have ? You can’t be always getting something new. That he’ll turn out anything great I don’t believe, but you may safely praise him. He is well read, a remarkable Oriental scholar, and has a good judgement. It was he who wrote that nice review of my *Reflections on Domestic Life*. We must be lenient towards the young man.”

““But he is a complete ass !” objected another of the gentlemen. “Nothing is worse in poetry than mediocrity, and he certainly does not go beyond that.”

““Poor fellow !” observed a third, “and his aunt is so happy about him. It was she, Mr. Editor, who got together so many subscribers for your last translation.”

““Ah, the good woman ! Well, I have noticed the book briefly. Undoubted talent—a welcome offering—a flower in the garden of poetry—prettily brought out—and so on. But this other book—I suppose the author expects me to purchase it ? I hear it is praised. He has genius, certainly : don’t you think so ?”

““Yes, all the world declares as much,” replied the poet,

“but it has turned out rather wildly. The punctuation of the book, in particular, is very eccentric.”

““It will be good for him if we pull him to pieces, and anger him a little, otherwise he will get too good an opinion of himself.”

““But that would be unfair,” objected the fourth. “Let us not carp at little faults, but rejoice over the real and abundant good that we find here: he surpasses all the rest.”

““Not so. If he be a true genius, he can bear the sharp voice of censure. There are people enough to praise him. Don’t let us quite turn his head.”

““Decided talent,” wrote the editor, “with the usual carelessness. That he can write incorrect verses may be seen in page 25, where there are two false quantities. We recommend him to study the ancients, &c.”

‘I went away,’ continued the Moon, ‘and looked through the windows in the aunt’s house. There sat the be-praised poet, the *tame* one; all the guests paid homage to him, and he was happy.

‘I sought out the other poet, the *wild* one; him also I found in a great assembly at his patron’s, where the *tame* poet’s book was being discussed.

““I shall read yours also,” said Maecenas; “but to speak honestly—you know I never hide my opinion from you—I don’t expect much from it, for you are much too wild, too fantastic. But it must be allowed that, as a man, you are highly respectable.”

‘A young girl sat in a corner; and she read in a book these words:

“In the dust lies genius and glory
But ev’ry-day talent will *pay*.
It’s only the old, old story,
But the piece is repeated each day.”

FOURTEENTH EVENING

THE Moon said, ‘Beside the woodland path there are two small farm-houses. The doors are low, and some of the windows are placed quite high, and others close to the ground; and white-thorn and barberry bushes grow around them. The roof of each house is overgrown with moss and with

yellow flowers and house-leek. Cabbage and potatoes are the only plants in the gardens, but out of the hedge there grows an elder tree, and under this tree sat a little girl, and she sat with her eyes fixed upon the old oak tree between the two huts.

‘It was an old withered stem. It had been sawn off at the top, and a stork had built his nest upon it; and he stood in this nest clapping with his beak. A little boy came and stood by the girl’s side: they were brother and sister.

“What are you looking at?” he asked.

“I’m watching the stork,” she replied: “our neighbour told me that he would bring us a little brother or sister to-day; let us watch to see it come!”

“The stork brings no such things,” the boy declared, “you may be sure of that. Our neighbour told me the same thing, but she laughed when she said it, and so I asked her if she could say ‘On my honour’, and she could not; and I know by that that the story about the storks is not true, and that they only tell it to us children for fun.”

“But where do the babies come from, then?” asked the girl.

“Why, an angel from heaven brings them under his cloak, but no man can see him; and that’s why we never know when he brings them.”

‘At that moment there was a rustling in the branches of the elder tree, and the children folded their hands and looked at one another: it was certainly the angel coming with the baby. They took each other’s hand, and at that moment the door of one of the houses opened, and the neighbour appeared.

“Come in, you two,” she said. “See what the stork has brought. It is a little brother.”

‘And the children nodded, for they had felt quite sure already that the baby was come.’

FIFTEENTH EVENING

‘I WAS gliding over the Lüneborg Heath,’ the Moon said. ‘A lonely hut stood by the wayside, a few scanty bushes grew near it, and a nightingale who had lost his way sang sweetly. He died in the coldness of the night: it was his farewell song that I heard.

'The dawn came glimmering red. I saw a caravan of emigrant peasant families who were bound to Bremen or Hamburg, there to take ship for America, where fancied prosperity would bloom for them. The mothers carried their little children at their backs, the elder ones skipped by their sides, and a poor starved horse tugged at a cart that bore their scanty effects. The cold wind whistled, and therefore the little girl nestled closer to the mother, who, looking up at my decreasing disk, thought of the bitter want at home, and spoke of the heavy taxes they had not been able to raise. The whole caravan thought of the same thing; therefore the rising dawn seemed to them a message from the sun, of fortune that was to gleam brightly upon them. They heard the dying nightingale sing: it was no false prophet, but a harbinger of fortune. The wind whistled, therefore they did not understand that the nightingale sang, "Far away over the sea! Thou hast paid the long passage with all that was thine, and poor and helpless shalt thou enter Canaan. Thou must sell thyself, thy wife, and thy children. But your griefs shall not last long. Behind the broad fragrant leaves lurks the goddess of death, and her welcome kiss shall breathe fever into thy blood. Fare away, fare away, over the heaving billows." And the caravan listened well pleased to the song of the nightingale, which seemed to promise good fortune. Day broke through the light clouds; country-people went across the heath to church: the black-gowned women with their white head-dresses looked like ghosts that had stepped forth from the church pictures. All around lay a wide dead plain, covered with faded brown heath, and black charred spaces between the white sand-hills. The women carried hymn books, and walked into the church. Oh, pray, pray for those who are wandering to find graves beyond the foaming billows.'

SIXTEENTH EVENING

'I KNOW a Punchinello,' the Moon told me. 'The public applaud vociferously directly they see him. Every one of his movements is comic, and is sure to throw the house into

convulsions of laughter ; and yet there is no art in it all—it is complete nature. When he was yet a little boy, playing about with other boys, he was already Punch. Nature had intended him for it, and had provided him with a hump on his back, and another on his breast ; but his inward man, his mind, on the contrary, was richly furnished. No one could surpass him in depth of feeling or in readiness of intellect. The theatre was his ideal world. If he had possessed a slender well-shaped figure, he might have been the first tragedian on any stage ; the heroic, the great, filled his soul ; and yet he had to become a Punchinello. His very sorrow and melancholy did but increase the comic dryness of his sharply-cut features, and increased the laughter of the audience, who showered plaudits on their favourite. The lovely Columbine was indeed kind and cordial to him ; but she preferred to marry the Harlequin. It would have been too ridiculous if beauty and the beast had in reality paired together.

‘ When Punchinello was in very bad spirits, she was the only one who could force a smile or even a hearty burst of laughter from him : first she would be melancholy with him, then quieter, and at last quite cheerful and happy. “ I know very well what is the matter with you,” she said ; “ yes, you’re in love ! ” And he could not help laughing. “ I in love ! ” he cried, “ that would have an absurd look. How the public would shout ! ” “ Certainly, you are in love,” she continued ; and added with a comic pathos, “ and I am the person you are in love with.” You see, such a thing may be said when it is quite out of the question—and indeed, Punchinello burst out laughing, and gave a leap into the air, and his melancholy was forgotten.

‘ And yet she had only spoken the truth. He *did* love her, love her adoringly, as he loved what was great and lofty in art. At her wedding he was the merriest among the guests, but in the stillness of night he wept : if the public had seen his distorted face then, they would have applauded rapturously.

‘ And a few days ago, Columbine died. On the day of the funeral, Harlequin was not required to show himself on the boards, for he was a disconsolate widower. The director had to give a very merry piece, that the public might not

too painfully miss the pretty Columbine and the agile Harlequin. Therefore Punchinello had to be more boisterous and extravagant than ever ; and he danced and capered, with despair in his heart ; and the audience yelled, and shouted, "*Bravo ! bravissimo !*" Punchinello was called before the curtain. He was pronounced inimitable.

' But last night the hideous little fellow went out of the town, quite alone, to the deserted churchyard. The wreath of flowers on Columbine's grave was already faded, and he sat down there. It was a study for a painter. As he sat with his chin on his hands, his eyes turned up towards me, he looked like a grotesque monument—a Punch on a grave—peculiar and whimsical ! If the people could have seen their favourite, they would have cried as usual, "*Bravo, Punchinello ! bravo, bravissimo !*" "

SEVENTEENTH EVENING

HEAR what the Moon told me. ' I have seen the cadet who had just been made an officer put on his handsome uniform for the first time ; I have seen the young girl in her ball-dress, and the Prince's young wife happy in her gorgeous robes ; but never have I seen a felicity equal to that of a little girl of four years old, whom I watched this evening. She had received a new blue dress and a new pink hat ; the splendid attire had just been put on, and all were calling for a candle, for my rays, shining in through the windows of the room, were not bright enough for the occasion, and further illumination was required. There stood the little maid, stiff and upright as a doll, her arms stretched painfully straight out away from the dress, and her fingers apart ; and, oh, what happiness beamed from her eyes and from her whole countenance ! " To-morrow you shall go out in your new clothes," said her mother ; and the little one looked up at her hat and down at her frock, and smiled brightly. " Mother," she cried, " what will the little dogs think when they see me in these splendid new things ? " "

EIGHTEENTH EVENING

‘I HAVE spoken to you of Pompeii,’ said the Moon ; ‘that corpse of a city, exposed in the view of living towns : I know another sight still more strange, and this is not the corpse, but the spectre of a city. Whenever the jetty fountains splash into the marble basins, they seem to me to be telling the story of the floating city. Yes, the spouting water may tell of her, the waves of the sea may sing of her fame ! On the surface of the ocean a mist often rests, and that is her widow’s veil. The Bridegroom of the Sea is dead, his palace and his city are his mausoleum ! Dost thou know this city ? She has never heard the rolling of wheels or the hoof-tread of horses in her streets, through which the fish swim, while the black gondola glides spectrally over the green water. I will show you the place,’ continued the Moon, ‘the largest square in it, and you will fancy yourself transported into the city of a fairy tale. The grass grows rank among the broad flagstones, and in the morning twilight thousands of tame pigeons flutter around the solitary lofty tower. On three sides you find yourself surrounded by cloistered walks. In these the silent Turk sits smoking his long pipe ; the handsome Greek leans against the pillar, and gazes at the upraised trophies and lofty masts, memorials of power that is gone. The flags hang down like mourning scarves. A girl rests there : she has put down her heavy pails filled with water, the yoke with which she has carried them rests on one of her shoulders, and she leans against the mast of victory. That is not a fairy palace you see before you yonder, but a church : the gilded domes and shining orbs flash back my beams ; the glorious bronze horses up yonder have made journeys, like the bronze horse in the fairy tale : they have come hither, and gone hence, and have returned again. Do you notice the variegated splendour of the walls and windows ? It looks as if Genius had followed the caprices of a child, in the adornment of these singular temples. Do you see the winged lion on the pillar ? The gold glitters still, but his wings are tied—the lion is dead, for the King of the Sea is dead ; the great halls stand desolate, and where gorgeous paintings hung of yore, the

naked wall now peers through. The beggar sleeps under the arcade, whose pavement in old times was trodden only by the feet of the high nobility. From the deep wells, and perhaps from the prisons by the Bridge of Sighs, rise the accents of woe, as at the time when the tambourine was heard in the gay gondolas, and the golden ring was cast from the Bucentaur to Adria, the Queen of the Seas. Adria ! shroud thyself in mists ; let the veil of thy widowhood shroud thy form, and clothe in the weeds of woe the mausoleum of thy bridegroom—the marble, spectral Venice !’

NINETEENTH EVENING

‘I LOOKED down upon a great theatre,’ said the Moon. ‘The house was crowded, for a new actor was to make his first appearance that night. My rays glided over a little window in the wall, and I saw a painted face with the forehead pressed against the panes. It was the hero of the evening. The knightly beard curled crisply about the chin ; but there were tears in the man’s eyes, for he had been hissed off, and indeed with reason. The poor Incapable ! But Incapables cannot be admitted into the empire of Art. He had deep feeling, and loved his art enthusiastically, but the art loved not him. The prompter’s bell sounded ; “*the hero enters with a determined air*,” so ran the stage direction in his part, and he had to appear before an audience who turned him into ridicule. When the piece was over, I saw a form wrapped in a mantle creeping down the steps : it was the vanquished knight of the evening. The scene-shifters whispered to one another, and I followed the poor fellow home to his room. To hang oneself is to die a mean death, and poison is not always at hand, I know ; but he thought of both. I saw how he looked at his pale face in the glass, with eyes half closed, to see if he should look well as a corpse. A man may be very unhappy, and yet exceedingly affected. He thought of death, of suicide ; I believe he pitied himself, for he wept bitterly ; and when a man has had his cry out he doesn’t kill himself.

‘Since that time a year had rolled by. Again a play was to be acted, but in a little theatre, and by a poor strolling company. Again I saw the well-remembered face, with the

painted cheeks and the crisp beard. He looked up at me and smiled ; and yet he had been hissed off only a minute before—hissed off from a wretched theatre by a miserable audience. And to-night a shabby hearse rolled out of the town gate. It was a suicide—our painted, despised hero. The driver of the hearse was the only person present, for no one followed except my beams. In a corner of the churchyard the corpse of the suicide was shovelled into the earth, and nettles will soon be rankly growing over his grave, and the sexton will throw thorns and weeds from the other graves upon it.’

TWENTIETH EVENING

‘I COME from Rome,’ said the Moon. ‘In the midst of the city, upon one of the seven hills, lie the ruins of the imperial palace. The wild fig-tree grows in the clefts of the wall, and covers the nakedness thereof with its broad grey-green leaves ; trampling among heaps of rubbish, the ass treads upon green laurels, and rejoices over the rank thistles. From this spot, whence the eagles of Rome once flew abroad, whence they “came, saw, and conquered,” a door leads into a little mean house, built of clay between two broken marble pillars ; the wild vine hangs like a mourning garland over the crooked window. An old woman and her little granddaughter live there : they rule now in the palace of the Caesars, and show to strangers the remains of its past glories. Of the splendid throne-room only a naked wall yet stands, and a black cypress throws its dark shadow on the spot where the throne once stood. The earth lies several feet deep on the broken pavement ; and the little maiden, now the daughter of the imperial palace, often sits there on her stool when the evening bells ring. The keyhole of the door close by she calls her turret window ; through this she can see half Rome, as far as the mighty cupola of St. Peter’s.

‘On this evening, as usual, stillness reigned around ; and in the full beam of my light came the little granddaughter. On her head she carried an earthen pitcher of antique shape filled with water. Her feet were bare, her short frock and her white sleeves were torn. I kissed her pretty round shoulders, her dark eyes, and black shining hair. She

mounted the stairs ; they were steep, having been made up of rough blocks of broken marble and the capital of a fallen pillar. The coloured lizards slipped away, startled, from before her feet, but she was not frightened at them. Already she lifted her hand to pull the door-bell—a hare's foot fastened to a string formed the bell-handle of the imperial palace. She paused for a moment—of what might she be thinking ? Perhaps of the beautiful Christ-child, dressed in gold and silver, which was down below in the chapel, where the silver candlesticks gleamed so bright, and where her little friends sang the hymns in which she also could join ? I know not. Presently she moved again—she stumbled ; the earthen vessel fell from her head, and broke on the marble steps. She burst into tears. The beautiful daughter of the imperial palace wept over the worthless broken pitcher ; with her bare feet she stood there weeping, and dared not pull the string, the bell-rope of the imperial palace !'

TWENTY-FIRST EVENING

IT was more than a fortnight since the Moon had shone. Now he stood once more, round and bright, above the clouds, moving slowly onward. Hear what the Moon told me.

'From a town in Fezzan I followed a caravan. On the margin of the sandy desert, in a salt plain, that shone like a frozen lake, and was only covered in spots with light drifting sand, a halt was made. The eldest of the company—the water-gourd hung at his girdle, and by his head lay a little bag of unleavened bread—drew a square in the sand with his staff, and wrote in it a few words out of the Koran, and then the whole caravan passed over the consecrated spot. A young merchant, a child of the East, as I could tell by his eye and his figure, rode pensively forward on his white snorting steed. Was he thinking, perchance, of his fair young wife ? It was only two days ago that the camel, adorned with furs and with costly shawls, had carried her, the beauteous bride, round the walls of the city, while drums and cymbals had sounded, the women sang, and festive shots, of which the bridegroom fired the

greatest number, resounded round the camel ; and now he was journeying with the caravan across the desert.

‘ For many nights I followed the train. I saw them rest by the well-side among the stunted palms ; they thrust the knife into the breast of the camel that had fallen, and roasted its flesh by the fire. My beams cooled the glowing sands, and showed them the black rocks, dead islands in the immense ocean of sand. No hostile tribes met them in their pathless route, no storms arose, no columns of sand whirled destruction over the journeying caravan. At home the beautiful wife prayed for her husband and her father. “ Are they dead ? ” she asked of my golden crescent ; “ Are they dead ? ” she cried to my full disk. Now the desert lies behind them. This evening they sit beneath the lofty palm-trees, where the crane flutters round them with its long wings, and the pelican watches them from the branches of the mimosa. The luxuriant herbage is trampled down, crushed by the feet of elephants. A troop of negroes are returning from a market in the interior of the land ; the women, with copper buttons in their black hair, and decked out in clothes dyed with indigo, drive the heavily-laden oxen, on whose backs slumber the naked black children. A negro leads by a string a young lion which he has bought. They approach the caravan ; the young merchant sits pensive and motionless, thinking of his beautiful wife, dreaming, in the land of the blacks, of his white fragrant lily beyond the desert. He raises his head, and——’

But at this moment a cloud passed before the Moon, and then another. I heard nothing more from him that evening.

TWENTY-SECOND EVENING

‘ I SAW a little girl weeping,’ said the Moon : ‘ she was weeping over the depravity of the world. She had received a most beautiful doll as a present. Oh, that was a glorious doll, so fair and delicate ! She did not seem created for the sorrows of this world. But the brothers of the little girl, those great naughty boys, had set the doll high up in the branches of a tree, and had run away.

‘ The little girl could not reach up to the doll, and could

not help her down, and that is why she was crying. The doll must certainly have been crying too, for she stretched out her arms among the green branches, and looked quite mournful. Yes, these are the troubles of life of which the little girl had often heard tell. Alas, poor doll ! it began to grow dark already ; and night would soon come on ! Was she to be left sitting there alone on the bough all night long ? No, the little maid could not make up her mind to that. " I'll stay with you," she said, although she felt anything but happy in her mind. She could almost fancy she distinctly saw little gnomes, with their high-crowned hats, sitting in the bushes ; and farther back in the long walk, tall spectres appeared to be dancing. They came nearer and nearer, and stretched out their hands towards the tree on which the doll sat ; they laughed scornfully, and pointed at her with their fingers. Oh, how frightened the little maid was ! " But if one has not done anything wrong," she thought, " nothing evil can harm one. I wonder if I have done anything wrong ? " And she considered. " Oh, yes ! I laughed at the poor duck with the red rag on her leg ; she limped along so funnily, I could not help laughing ; but it's a sin to laugh at animals." And she looked up at the doll. " Did you laugh at animals ? " she asked ; and it seemed as if the doll shook her head.

TWENTY-THIRD EVENING

' I LOOKED down on Tyrol,' said the Moon, ' and my beams caused the dark pines to throw long shadows upon the rocks. I looked at the pictures of St. Christopher carrying the Infant Jesus that are painted there upon the walls of the houses, colossal figures reaching from the ground to the roof. St. Florian was represented pouring water on the burning house, and the Lord hung bleeding on the great cross by the wayside. To the present generation these are old pictures, but I saw when they were put up, and marked how one followed the other. On the brow of the mountain yonder is perched, like a swallow's nest, a lonely convent of nuns. Two of the sisters stood up in the tower tolling the bell ; they were both young, and therefore their glances flew over the mountain out into the world.

A travelling coach passed by below, the postilion wound his horn, and the poor nuns looked after the carriage for a moment with a mournful glance, and a tear gleamed in the eyes of the younger one. And the horn sounded faintly and more faint, and the convent bell drowned its expiring echoes.'

TWENTY-FOURTH EVENING

HEAR what the Moon told me. 'Some years ago, here in Copenhagen, I looked through the window of a mean little room. The father and mother slept, but the little son was awake. I saw the flowered cotton curtains of the bed move, and the child peep forth. At first I thought he was looking at the great clock, which was gaily painted in red and green. At the top sat a cuckoo, below hung the heavy leaden weights, and the pendulum with the polished disk of metal went to and fro, and said, "Tick, tick." But no, he was not looking at the clock, but at his mother's spinning-wheel, that stood just underneath it. That was the boy's favourite piece of furniture, but he dared not touch it, for if he meddled with it he got a rap on the knuckles. For hours together, when his mother was spinning, he would sit quietly by her side, watching the whirring spindle and the revolving wheel, and as he sat he thought of many things. Oh, if he might only turn the wheel himself! Father and mother were asleep: he looked at them, and looked at the spinning-wheel, and presently a little naked foot peeped out of the bed, and then a second foot, and then two little white legs. There he stood. He looked round once more, to see if father and mother were still asleep,—yes, they slept; and now he crept *softly, softly*, in his short little nightgown, to the spinning-wheel, and began to spin. The thread flew from the wheel, and the wheel whirled faster and faster. I kissed his fair hair and his blue eyes, it was such a pretty picture.

'At that moment the mother awoke. The curtain shook; she looked forth, and fancied she saw a gnome or some other kind of little spectre. "In Heaven's name!" she cried, and aroused her husband in a frightened way. He opened his eyes, rubbed them with his hands, and looked at the

brisk little lad. "Why, that is Bertel," said he. And my eye quitted the poor room, for I have so much to see. At the same moment I looked at the halls of the Vatican, where the marble gods are enthroned. I shone upon the group of the Laocoon ; the stone seemed to sigh. I pressed a silent kiss on the lips of the Muses, and they seemed to stir and move. But my rays lingered longest about the Nile group with the colossal god. Leaning against the Sphinx, he lies there thoughtful and meditative, as if he were thinking on the rolling centuries ; and little love-gods sport with him and with the crocodiles. In the horn of plenty sits with folded arms a little tiny love-god contemplating the great solemn river-god, a true picture of the boy at the spinning-wheel—the features were exactly the same. Charming and lifelike stood the little marble form, and yet the wheel of the year has turned more than a thousand times since the time when it sprang forth from the stone. Just as often as the boy in the little room turned the spinning-wheel had the great wheel murmured, before the age could again call forth marble gods equal to those he afterwards formed.

'Years have passed since all this happened,' the Moon went on to say. 'Yesterday I looked upon a bay on the eastern coast of Denmark. Glorious woods are there, and high banks, an old knightly castle with red walls, swans floating in the ponds, and in the background appears, among orchards, a little town with a church. Many boats, the crews all furnished with torches, glided over the silent expanse—but these fires had not been kindled for catching fish, for everything had a festive look. Music sounded, a song was sung, and in one of the boats a man stood erect, to whom homage was paid by the rest, a tall sturdy man, wrapped in a cloak. He had blue eyes and long white hair. I knew him, and thought of the Vatican, and of the group of the Nile, and the old marble gods. I thought of the simple little room where little Bertel sat in his nightshirt by the spinning-wheel. The wheel of time has turned, and new gods have come forth from the stone. From the boats there arose a shout : "Hurrah ! hurrah for Bertel Thorwaldsen !"'

TWENTY-FIFTH EVENING

‘I WILL now give you a picture from Frankfort,’ said the Moon. ‘I especially noticed one building there. It was not the house in which Goethe was born, nor the old council-house, through whose grated windows peered the horns of the oxen that were roasted and given to the people when the Emperors were crowned. No, it was a private house, plain in appearance, and painted green. It stood at the corner of the narrow Jews’ Street. It was Rothschild’s house.’

‘I looked through the open door. The staircase was brilliantly lighted: servants carrying wax candles in massive silver candlesticks stood there, and bowed low before an aged woman, who was being brought downstairs in a litter. The proprietor of the house stood bareheaded, and respectfully imprinted a kiss on the hand of the old woman. She was his mother. She nodded in a friendly manner to him and to the servants, and they carried her into the dark narrow street, into a little house that was her dwelling. Here her children had been born, from hence the fortune of the family had arisen. If she deserted the despised street and the little house, fortune would perhaps desert her children. That was her firm belief.’

The Moon told me no more; his visit this evening was far too short. But I thought of the old woman in the narrow despised street. It would have cost her but a word, and a brilliant house would have arisen for her on the banks of the Thames—a word, and a villa would have been prepared in the Bay of Naples.

‘If I deserted the lowly house, where the fortunes of my sons first began to bloom, fortune would desert them!’ It was a superstition, but a superstition of such a class, that he who knows the story and has seen this picture, need have only two words placed under the picture to make him understand it; and these two words are: ‘A mother.’

TWENTY-SIXTH EVENING

‘It was yesterday, in the morning twilight’—these are the words the Moon told me—‘in the great city no chimney was yet smoking—and it was just at the chimneys that

I was looking. Suddenly a little head emerged from one of them, and then half a body, the arms resting on the rim of the chimney-pot. "Hurrah!" cried a voice. It was the little chimney-sweeper, who had for the first time in his life crept through a chimney and stuck out his head at the top. "Hurrah!" Yes, certainly that was a very different thing from creeping about in the dark narrow chimneys! the air blew so fresh, and he could look over the whole city towards the green wood. The sun was just rising. It shone round and great, just in his face, that beamed with triumph, though it was very prettily blacked with soot.

"The whole town can see me now," he exclaimed, "and the moon can see me now, and the sun too. Hurrah!" And he flourished his broom in triumph.

TWENTY-SEVENTH EVENING

'LAST night I looked down upon a town in China,' said the Moon. 'My beams irradiated the naked walls that form the streets there. Now and then, certainly, a door is seen, but it is locked, for what does the Chinaman care about the outer world? Close wooden shutters covered the windows behind the walls of the houses; but through the windows of the temple a faint light glimmered. I looked in, and saw the quaint decorations within. From the floor to the ceiling pictures are painted in the most glaring colours and richly gilt—pictures representing the deeds of the gods here on earth. In each niche statues are placed, but they are almost entirely hidden by the coloured drapery and the banners that hang down. Before each idol (and they are all made of tin) stood a little altar with holy water, with flowers and burning wax lights on it. Above all the rest stood Fu, the chief deity, clad in a garment of yellow silk, for yellow is here the sacred colour. At the foot of the altar sat a living being, a young priest. He appeared to be praying, but in the midst of his prayer he seemed to fall into deep thought, and this must have been wrong, for his cheeks glowed and he held down his head. Poor Soui-hong! Was he, perhaps, dreaming of working in the little flower-garden behind the high street wall? And did that occupation seem more agreeable to him than watching the

wax lights in the temple ? Or did he wish to sit at the rich feast, wiping his mouth with silver paper between each course ? Or was his sin so great that, if he dared utter it, the Celestial Empire would punish it with death ? Had his thoughts ventured to fly with the ships of the barbarians, to their homes in far distant England ? No, his thoughts did not fly so far, and yet they were sinful, sinful as thoughts born of young hearts, sinful here in the temple, in the presence of Fu and other holy gods.

‘I know whither his thoughts had strayed. At the farther end of the city, on the flat roof paved with porcelain, on which stood the handsome vases covered with painted flowers, sat the beauteous Pe, of the little roguish eyes, of the full lips, and of the tiny feet. The tight shoe pained her, but her heart pained her still more. She lifted her graceful round arm, and her satin dress rustled. Before her stood a glass bowl containing four gold-fish. She stirred the bowl carefully with a slender lacquered stick, very slowly, for she, too, was lost in thought. Was she thinking, perchance, how the fishes were richly clothed in gold, how they lived calmly and peacefully in their crystal world, how they were regularly fed, and yet how much happier they might be if they were free ? Yes, that she could well understand, the beautiful Pe. Her thoughts wandered away from her home, wandered to the temple, but not for the sake of holy things. Poor Pe ! Poor Soui-hong !

‘Their earthly thoughts met, but my cold beam lay between the two, like the sword of the cherub.’

TWENTY-EIGHTH EVENING

‘THE air was calm,’ said the Moon ; ‘the water was as transparent as the pure ether through which I was gliding, and deep below the surface I could see the strange plants that stretched up their long arms towards me like the gigantic trees of the forest. The fishes swam to and fro above their tops. High in the air a flight of wild swans were winging their way, one of which sank lower and lower, with wearied pinions, his eyes following the airy caravan, that melted farther and farther into the distance. With

outspread wings he sank slowly, as a soap-bubble sinks in the still air, till he touched the water. At length his head lay back between his wings, and silently he lay there, like a white lotus flower upon the quiet lake. And a gentle wind arose, and crisped the quiet surface, which gleamed like the clouds that poured along in great broad waves ; and the swan raised his head, and the glowing water splashed like blue fire over his breast and back. The dawn illuminated the red clouds, the swan rose strengthened, and flew towards the rising sun, towards the bluish coast whither the caravan had gone ; but he flew all alone, with a longing in his breast. Lonely he flew over the blue swelling billows.'

TWENTY-NINTH EVENING

'I WILL give you another picture of Sweden,' said the Moon. 'Among dark pine-woods, near the melancholy banks of the Roxen, lies the old convent church of Wreta. My rays glided through the grating into the roomy vaults, where kings sleep tranquilly in great stone coffins. On the wall, above the grave of each, is placed the emblem of earthly grandeur, a kingly crown ; but it is made only of wood, painted and gilt, and is hung on a wooden peg driven into the wall. The worms have gnawed the gilded wood, the spider has spun her web from the crown down to the coffin, like a mourning banner, frail and transient as the grief of mortals. How quietly they sleep ! I can remember them quite plainly. I still see the bold smile on their lips, that so strongly and plainly expressed joy or grief. When the steamboat winds along like a magic snail over the lakes, a stranger often comes to the church, and visits the burial vault ; he asks the names of the kings, and they have a dead and forgotten sound. He glances with a smile at the worm-eaten crowns, and if he happens to be a pious, thoughtful man, something of melancholy mingles with the smile. Slumber on, ye dead ones ! The Moon thinks of you, the Moon at night sends down his rays into your silent kingdom, over which hangs the crown of pine-wood.'

THIRTIETH EVENING

‘CLOSE by the high road,’ said the Moon, ‘is an inn, and opposite to it is a great wagon-shed, whose straw roof was just being re-thatched. I looked down between the bare rafters and through the open loft into the comfortless space below. The turkey-cock slept on the beam, and the saddle rested in the empty crib. In the middle of the shed stood a travelling carriage ; the proprietor was inside, fast asleep, while the horses were being watered. The coachman stretched himself, though I am very sure that he had been most comfortably asleep half the last stage. The door of the servants’ room stood open, and the bed looked as if it had been turned over and over ; the candle stood on the floor, and had burned deep down into the socket. The wind blew cold through the shed : it was nearer to the dawn than to midnight. In the stall, on the ground, slept a wandering family of musicians. The father and mother seemed to be dreaming of the burning liquor that remained in the bottle. The little pale daughter was dreaming too, for her eyes were wet with tears. The harp stood at their heads, and the dog lay stretched at their feet.’

THIRTY-FIRST EVENING

‘IT was in a little provincial town,’ the Moon said ; ‘it certainly happened last year, but that has nothing to do with the matter. I saw it quite plainly. To-day I read about it in the papers, but there it was not half so clearly expressed. In the tap-room of the little inn sat the bear-leader, eating his supper ; the bear was tied up outside, behind the wood pile—poor Bruin, who did nobody any harm, though he looked grim enough. Up in the garret three little children were playing by the light of my beams ; the eldest was perhaps six years old, the youngest certainly not more than two. Tramp ! tramp !—somebody was coming upstairs : who might it be ? The door was thrust open—it was Bruin, the great, shaggy Bruin ! He had got tired of waiting down in the courtyard, and had found his way to the stairs. I saw it all,’ said the Moon. ‘The

children were very much frightened at first at the great shaggy animal; each of them crept into a corner, but he found them all out, and smelt at them, but did them no harm. "This must be a great dog," they said, and began to stroke him. He lay down upon the ground, the youngest boy clambered on his back, and, bending down a little head of golden curls, played at hiding in the beast's shaggy skin. Presently the eldest boy took his drum, and beat upon it till it rattled again: the bear rose up on its hind legs and began to dance. It was a charming sight to behold. Each boy now took his gun, and the bear was obliged to have one too, and he held it up quite properly. Here was a capital playmate they had found! and they began marching—one, two; one, two.

'Suddenly some one came to the door, which opened, and the mother of the children appeared. You should have seen her in her dumb terror, with her face as white as chalk, her mouth half-open, and her eyes fixed in a horrified stare. But the youngest boy nodded to her in great glee, and called out in his infantile prattle, "We're playing at soldiers." And then the bear-leader came running up.'

THIRTY-SECOND EVENING

THE wind blew stormy and cold, the clouds flew hurriedly past; only for a moment now and then did the Moon become visible. He said, 'I look down through the silent sky upon the driving clouds, and see the great shadows chasing each other across the earth. I looked upon a prison. A closed carriage stood before it; a prisoner was to be carried away. My rays pierced through the grated window towards the wall: the prisoner was scratching a few lines upon it, as a parting token; but he did not write words, but a melody, the outpouring of his heart. The door was opened, and he was led forth, and fixed his eyes upon my round disk. Clouds passed between us, as if he were not to see my face, nor I his. He stepped into the carriage, the door was closed, the whip cracked, and the horses galloped off into the thick forest, whither my rays were not able to follow him; but as I glanced through the grated window, my rays glided over the notes, his last farewell engraved on the

prison wall—where words fail, sounds can often speak. My rays could only light up isolated notes, so the greater part of what was written there will ever remain dark to me. Was it the death-hymn he wrote there? Were these the glad notes of joy? Did he drive away to meet his death, or hasten to the embraces of his beloved? The rays of the Moon do not read all that is written by mortals.’

THIRTY-THIRD EVENING

‘I LOVE the children,’ said the Moon, ‘especially the quite little ones—they are so droll. Sometimes I peep into the room, between the curtain and the window-frame, when they are not thinking of me. It gives me pleasure to see them dressing and undressing. First, the little round naked shoulder comes creeping out of the frock, then the arm; or I see how the stocking is drawn off, and a plump little white leg makes its appearance, and a little white foot that is fit to be kissed, and I kiss it too.

‘But about what I was going to tell you. This evening I looked through a window, before which no curtain was drawn, for nobody lives opposite. I saw a whole troop of little ones, all of one family, and among them was a little sister. She is only four years old, but can say her prayers as well as any of the rest. The mother sits by her bed every evening, and hears her say her prayers; and then she has a kiss, and the mother sits by the bed till the little one has gone to sleep, which generally happens as soon as ever she closes her eyes.

‘This evening the two elder children were a little boisterous. One of them hopped about on one leg in his long white nightgown, and the other stood on a chair surrounded by the clothes of all the children, and declared it was a tableau, and the others were to guess what it was. The third and fourth laid the playthings carefully in the box, for that is a thing that has to be done; and the mother sat by the bed of the youngest, and announced to all the rest that they were to be quiet, for little sister was going to say her prayers.

‘I looked in, over the lamp, into the little maiden’s bed, where she lay under the neat white coverlet, her hands

folded demurely and her little face quite grave and serious. She was saying the Lord's Prayer aloud. But her mother interrupted her in the middle of her prayer. "How is it," she asked, "that when you have prayed for daily bread, you always add something I cannot understand? You must tell me what that is." The little one lay silent, and looked at her mother in embarrassment. "What is it you say after *our daily bread*?" "Dear mother, don't be angry: I only said, *and plenty of butter on it.*"

